
Boundaries, Burnout & The Art of Saying No – Worksheet 3 – Avoiding Relationship Resentment

When people start working on boundaries, one of the biggest reasons they cite is to reduce resentment in their relationships. One way to do that is by thinking about what you really want and are willing to give in a relationship. Many people find themselves giving up so much in a relationship that they lose themselves in the process. This doesn't end up serving anyone. Instead, it leads to resentment and bitterness. Everyone has needs in a relationship, and when you try to ignore these needs, your body and emotions will start to sound on high alarm. Irritability may be an early sign, though it doesn't take long for this building resentment to eat at a relationship, and hurt everyone involved.

Reflecting on Resentment in Your Life

Now, take the time to reflect. Are you already feeling the effects of resentment? If so, how is it impacting your sense of self, and the relationship?

Understanding Your Limits

You can think about understanding your own limits as a good preventative measure if you don't want your relationship to implode. So let's get specific. When you look closely at what you give in a relationship, how much of it are you doing out of a wanting or willing mindset, and how much are you doing out of resentful compliance?

Resentful compliance involves saying yes to something you don't really want to do just so the other person will leave you alone. It sounds like an agreement, but isn't really one, and can involve saying yes but then simply failing to follow through (or becoming bitter and resentful if you do follow through).

Examples (and these could fit any category) could include things like: driving your partner to work, making meals, providing a listening ear, offering financial advice, giving up your paid job so you can stay home with the kids, compromising on vacation plans, seeing less of your friends, having less alone time so you can support your partner in a crisis, spending time with their family, helping them out of debt, exploring your sexuality together.... and so much more.

Think of everything you give in your relationship – in terms of time, energy, and resources – and add it into one of the three categories on the following page.



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Wanting	Willing	Resentfully Compliant

Setting Limits

What is the first thing on your list of resentfully compliant behaviors that you're ready to start saying "no" to? What will help you take this action? (eg., an inner strength, external support of some kind, or a reminder about your worth).

More on the concept of Resentful Compliance:

"Resentful Compliance Versus Commitment", June 27, 2011, By Jim Hutt, PhD, Family Problems Topic Expert Contributor <http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/resentful-compliance-commitment-communication>



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