

Stressed and Burnt Out: Trapped Between the Anxiety Rock When You Say “Yes” and the Guilty Hard Place When You say “No”

I just received an email with a quotation from *The Invitation*, by Visionary author, Oriah Mountain Dreamer : “It doesn’t interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart’s longing. . . .I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself: if you can bear the accusation of ‘betrayal’ and not betray your own soul . . . ” It struck a chord with me because supporting people to recognize and honor their True Selves is a passion of mine.

A major cause of stress, overwhelm & burnt-outedness is the habit of ignoring the yearnings of our own True Selves while saying “yes” to other people’s requests (or demands) for our time, money, actions, even beliefs. What makes us do that? It’s usually out of fears, and the false beliefs that go with the fears.

There’s fear of disappointing others. Do you believe that YOU are responsible for another’s feelings and experience, and that the other person is not responsible for themselves? False belief. This belief is often paired with the belief that others are responsible for your experience. That belief can make you think that if you’re not feeling happy, it is somebody else’s fault, and can lead to anger and resentment. And what about disappointing your own ever-growing self?

Then there’s fear of hurting someone. Often with fear of hurting another is the belief that if another’s feelings are hurt, they will abandon you or retaliate against you. And that goes with the false belief that you are not really good enough if you don’t provide or do what they want. And what about hurting your own self respect? How does it really feel to think you have to “buy” affection?

There are other common fears in saying ‘No’. But whatever the fears are, the problem is that when we make choices out of fear, we deep down inside know it. And that eats away at our self esteem. We see our selves as weak and just perpetuate the false beliefs about our own unworthiness and lack of capability. Unfortunately, the less capable you feel, the more overwhelming external events can feel.

If this sounds like you, you can find help. Take it from one who knows you can change. Me.

Dr. Jane Bolton is a Culver City marriage and family therapist and a contemporary psychoanalyst who is dedicated to supporting people in the highest and fullest expression of their Authentic Selves. This includes Discovery, Understanding, Acceptance, Expression, and Empowerment of the Self. www.DrJaneBolton.com. Call 310.838.6363.