

Scot McKay (00:00.238)

You're listening to Snippets from the Summit with your host Scot McKay.

All right, gentlemen, this is your main man, Scot McKay, coming at you again with another snippet from the summit as part of The Mountain Top Podcast from X & Y Communications. Today, we're going to talk about the infamous topic of people pleasing. Now, people pleasing is often caused by, well, parents who weren't exactly giving kids approval back in the people pleasers childhood. In other words, let's give an example.

The kid got straight A's all the time and that was considered normal and expected. But if there was ever a B plus, that was cause for alarm. We've got to get that fixed and we've got to ship the kid off to a child psychologist immediately. On the sports field, if this kid threw all strikes and no balls, then you know, that's what was expected in Little League this year. If the kid's pitching starts getting a little bit off, well then we've got to hire a coach.

Dad yells at him in front of the other kids for walking that last batter, cause he's probably the coach of the team, right? And in both that case and the case of the kid trying to get good grades, they're doing the best they could. But there's never any celebration, only alarm and well, disapproval whenever anything goes less than perfectly, right? So in self-help and mental health contexts, people pleasing is usually talked about

Being an open door for manipulators, Narcissists, etc in other words when you're trying too hard to get people to like you You'll do whatever it takes to earn that approval and well narcissists take full advantage of that and it leads to a lot of pain Especially for the people pleaser, right? But you know what? There's another dark side to being a people pleaser That very few people talk about that we're gonna throw on the table today. Here it is

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people pleasing doesn't work. In fact, most people pleasers are especially frustrated to find the exact opposite happens. People aren't pleased with them at all and they get less approval, not more approval because of their behavior. Recently, I was at a big event with several thousand people and there was this guy who volunteered to open the whole event in prayer. He said, I...

would love to have the opportunity to say God's blessing over this particular event. Okay, fair enough. So we invited everybody to stand. Gentlemen, take off your hats, bow your heads in prayer and said, Lord, we thank you for this wonderful event today. And then he stopped talking to God, whether he realized it or not, and started talking to the audience and said, and yes, all of you in the audience, be sure to be thankful to God today for being here and this opportunity to have this event.

and be sure to say thank you to all the volunteers and I want you to drive safely home and show good sportsmanship. And I opened up the corner of my eye while my head was bowed and I started saying to myself, wait a minute, are we still praying here? This guy isn't talking to God anymore. He was using this opportunity to address the crowd and give his version of announcements to an audience of 3000 so he could seem like this smart guy and this good guy.

who was bestowing his knowledge and his suggestions on everybody. Now he recovered at the end and said, yes, Lord, put a hedge of protection around this group and we give thanks for this, that and the other, amen. And we all kind of opened our eyes shrugged and said, all right, amen. But the effect on the crowd was not to think, hey, you know what, wow, thank you, dude, for this amazing gift of leading us all in prayer. But instead everybody sort of felt,

Good grief, what a douche. And all the while, you see, the guy probably thought he was helping. After all, he just led us all in prayer and maybe that wouldn't happen had he not volunteered. Who knows?

Now see, indeed, people pleasers think that they are giving, helping, and doing something incredibly cool for others. In their mind, they're doing something right, but they have a massive blind spot. It's still all about them.

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But they don't see it, even though everyone else does. That's why a person who's a people pleaser can give and give and give and at best still get criticized for being selfish. The women you so desperately want to like you and be attracted will sense the weakness like Dobermans smell fear. And worst of all, nobody at all wants to hang out with you if you're a people pleaser.

Indeed, the cruel irony of the people pleaser is wanting so much to earn friendship and respect, but suffering immense confusion when all they get is the exact opposite result. The pattern may involve, say, offering to lend the cool guy something that he needs and being the one who is Johnny on the spot and gives it to him only to have that cool guy go, thanks dude.

and either mess it up or forget to return it to them or lose it or something like that without ever really even being appreciative. Or a people pleaser may offer immense praise for a job well done in excess to the point of being obsequious even in hopes of perhaps making this person he's praising think he's this incredibly cool person who he should befriend and hang out with from now on when in reality the person he's praising just rolls his eyes and again says, yeah, thanks, half-hearted.

Or how about this example? Taking any chance at all of drawing attention to themselves, somehow especially if it doesn't seem like showing off. Now at this point, yes, I'm going to admit to you guys that people pleasing was a problem I personally suffered through immensely and yes, blindly for much of my young life.

One time I was volunteering at a summer camp for high school kids in my early college years and we were going to put on a play that demonstrated lots of things, including how a really manipulative boyfriend who uses a girl will be bad for a girl's mental health. And nobody wanted to play the boyfriend except guess who? Me, because I got a chance to get in front of everybody and be an actor and show everybody how well I could act like this guy.

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And to his credit, one of the senior counselors, one of the senior leaders of the camp pulled me aside and said, guess what? Whether you like it or not, you're not doing it. And here's why he did that. Because that particular character is despised by the end of that play. That character is absolutely the bad guy in that production. And because of my people pleasing tendencies, it would have been easy for me to become a lightning rod.

for people's displeasure instead of receiving any kind of praise for the performance no matter how well I did at actually acting. Why did he do that? Because I had this blind spot. I didn't even see the problem coming. All I knew was I wanted to get up there and try to get approval. So I'm giving you a lot of examples of the problem here and why it's a problem, but what's the cure? Well, I'm going to be perfectly honest with you here because why not?

Shining the light on this blind spot in and of itself is already a big help. But practically speaking, how about taking pride in letting others find out how amazing and cool you are? As a matter of fact, make a game of it. Now yes, you're going to have to get rid of the tendency to want immediate gratification and immediate payoff and approval from people right now, but patience will pay off and the reward of natural approval from others

is immensely more rewarding than trying to force the issue ever will be. And the clincher? Even those first few doses of real approval from others, however small, will likely be a forever cure. Here's a brief

note before I close. You might be out there saying, well, I shouldn't care what others think to begin with. But you know what, as macho as that sounds, going through life without ever being appreciated or congratulated

It's not a reasonable expectation for that to have any positive impact on one's mental health. Once the people-pleasing problem is solved, then the closest practice to not caring what others think that actually makes sense is to filter every third-party compliment or criticism through reason. Did you actually do well or not so much? If so, graciously say thank you to those who love you and ignore the jealous haters.

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But if and when you do see a pattern of suggestions for improvement, especially from people who you know care about you and may not even know each other, well, that's when to give serious consideration to raising the bar. Want to talk about this or anything else? [scot@mountaintoppodcast.com](mailto:scot@mountaintoppodcast.com). Be good out there.

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