

ACTING TRUE



It's possible to use values as a compass to maintain your integrity and authenticity, writes TARNYA DAVIS.

LAO Tzu, the ancient philosopher said: "Care about what other people think and you will always be their prisoner". Most of us are people-pleasers in some form or another.

However, some are more prone to it.

Pleasing others involves guessing what they want to make them happy, or what will make them think of us in a positive light, and then acting accordingly.

While this might not be conscious, the problem with people-pleasing is that, in doing so, sometimes our wants and needs suffer. If we are acting in a way that is inconsistent with who we are or what we want, it may create psychological distress. Not being authentic can affect our happiness and mental health.

We're not very good at hiding our emotions anyway. Research suggests that even when we try to hide our feelings, our micro-expressions are subconsciously recognised by others, leading to distress for both parties.

Research shows also that pretending is an enormous drain on brain power because it requires willpower. That energy spent then limits our ability to use self-control in other parts of the day. So, by trying to hide your distress because you don't want to trouble someone, or telling a fib to pretend to like something you don't, you have less self-control left to temper your anger in an argument later.

It might be better to aim to live according to your value of kindness, or *helping* others rather than *pleasing* others, while also making space for your needs.

Tarnya Davis is a clinical and forensic psychologist and principal of NewPsych Psychologists