Helping Yourself

Here are some things to think about:

- You can’t please everyone. Don’t expect approval all the time. Then it won’t be as hard when people don’t agree with you.

- Think about what’s really causing your feelings. Do you feel depressed because someone criticized you? It may be your need for approval that’s making you feel bad—not what the person said.

- Try not to judge yourself by how much approval you get from others. Good self-esteem comes from how you feel about yourself, not how others feel about you.

- Trust yourself to make decisions. Try not to depend as much on what others think. Making your own decisions builds confidence.

- Don’t give your personal power to others. What other people think doesn’t have to affect you unless you let it.

Getting Help

It isn’t easy to change the need for approval. If you’d like to have more control but don’t know how, you can get help.

Counselors, social workers and psychologists are specially trained to help develop personal power. They’re listed in the yellow pages of your phone book.

For lower fees, look under “social service agencies” or “mental health agencies.”

Many HMOs offer counseling. Your employer may have a program that offers help.

As with other health care providers, if you don’t like the first counselor you see, try someone else.
Having **PERSONAL POWER** means being in control of your life. It’s knowing “inside” that you’re okay.

**People who have personal power** trust themselves to make good decisions and choices. They have a healthy sense of their own worth.

**People without personal power** don’t trust their own judgment. They depend on others to make decisions. They judge themselves based on what others think of them.

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**Do you need approval?**

It's normal and healthy to enjoy approval. It feels good to be liked and get compliments.

But some people can't be happy without approval. They behave the way they think others want them to. They aren't in control of their own lives.

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**Where does the need for approval come from?**

Parents sometimes control their children's behavior by giving or not giving approval. Children learn that doing "good" things will win approval.

In school, children are taught to follow the rules. They may not learn how to make their own decisions. Winning the teacher's approval is often a way to succeed in school.

The media also makes us think we need the approval of others. Popular songs, commercials and ads encourage and take advantage of our need for approval.

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**How does personal power work?**

**People with personal power:**

- Have confidence and good self-esteem
- Take responsibility for their own problems
- Trust themselves to make good decisions
- Have good problem-solving skills

People who need others' approval to be happy have little control over their lives. Their self-esteem is based mainly on what other people think of them.

**Much of the time, people without personal power:**

- Feel insecure, worried or depressed
- Blame others for their problems
- Can't make decisions for themselves
- Have trouble solving problems

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**How's your personal power?**

- Do you feel anxious when someone doesn't agree with you?
- Do you agree with people even when you feel they're wrong?
- Is it hard for you to say no when people ask you to do something you really don't want to do?
- Do you need other people's approval in order to be happy?
- Do you say things you don't mean to try to make people like you?

If you answered yes to 3 or more of these questions, you might want to think about how much control you have over your life.

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*I used to make decisions based on what others thought. Now I'm learning to trust my own choices.*