

**Kris Plachy:** Hello, welcome! We are embarking on Season Five of Leadership is Feminine. Can you believe it? I'm so excited. And in numerology, five is the number for change. Just bouncing out of a month that was a five month. And it appears that change has been touching everyone's lives in different ways.

So, I thought it might be interesting to have that as our topic and touch all of the different pieces and parts of leading and building teams and building lives and working on ourselves that relate to change, elements that we want to add, to remove, to reevaluate, to keep forever and ever. So, let's start this very first episode of Season 5, and we're going to kick it off with a real doozy. Are you ready? Let's talk about "people-pleasing." Here we go!

Well, hello! So, for my clients over the next several months, I'm going to be leading a series in the How to CEO lab. And as a quick refresher, the How to CEO lab is our community program for women after you have completed How to CEO. So, once you've done our first 12 weeks with us and gone through Q&A calls with us and got advisement, then we invite you into the lab and we offer four calls a week of Q&A support in addition to all sorts of valuable tools, invitations to guest experts who are fellow female entrepreneurs running the world.

And I do different live topics; most of the time I'm teaching them, and some of the time we bring other experts in to do that as well. And we have other coaches who support our clients in this program as well. We have the fabulous Michelle Arant, we have the amazing Dr. Camille Broussard Wise, and we have recently invited Dr. Shanita Williams and Kristin Griffin to help us with different elements of thinking about being a leader, whether it's self-care, feedback, conscious inclusion, and just continuing to develop those leadership chops.

So, in the lab this quarter, I am leading a series called "The CEO Soul Series." And I wanted to do this because I really am finding with so many of my clients and friends, honestly, who have their own businesses and even friends who don't have their own businesses. Because there's sort of this collective, I don't want to call it relaxing, but sort of decompression happening. And yet, there's still a lot happening, right? It's like a lot of the texts and conversations I have with people.

Like I said at different parts of my life are like, "Man, like, can we get a break?"  
Like, the hits just keep rolling in, right?

And of course, that's being human and we all know that. It just feels like lately it's been a lot more "humany" than I recall in the first 50 years of my life. So, I wanted to talk about people-pleasing. And this came to me as I was walking and I was thinking about people-pleasing and I was thinking about my own life and I was thinking about, you know, where do I say yes when I really mean no? And why do I do that? And what am I trying to accomplish by doing that? And why do so many women associate with that people-pleasing? And why do men do that?

And some men do. I mean, I'm not saying all women are people-pleasers, and I'm certainly not saying there are no men that aren't. In fact, I think my husband would probably qualify as quite a people-pleaser, honestly. He'd probably agree with that. So, what is it, what are people pleasing? And I think we can dig into that in a lot of different directions. And like I always say, I'm not a psychologist. I just observe human behaviour and I like to think about how we expand things and choose to think about things differently.

And so, as I was thinking about people-pleasing, I realized that there's sort of this very fine line between people-pleasing, which is basically what we tell ourselves we're doing when we say yes to something when we really don't want to do it because we don't want to let someone else down. So, we're people-pleasing, right? We're foregoing our own pleasure on behalf of someone else. But then the other, the fine line of that is sort of initially what I wrote was people-depleting, which is we're people-controlling, right? So, there are people who are not people-pleasers at all. They're people-controllers, they're people-depleters, they are demanding, they're very forceful. They don't do anything other people want them to do and in fact, it's the opposite. They want other people to do all the things they want them to do so that they can be pleased, right?

And I do see an interesting dynamic there that oftentimes, that person is the same. Like, they're really, really, really people-pleasing in some spaces and really, really, really people-controlling, people-depleting if others demand it. And so, what's that about?

So, the first thing I would ask you to think about is do you think of yourself as a people-pleaser and why. And if you say yes more than you want to, and you say no less than you wish you could, then chances are you fall into that. But what that really means is you're saying yes to something that you don't want to say yes to, not to please the other person. You're saying yes to something you don't really want to because you don't want to experience your own discomfort of saying no, right? We don't want to experience their disappointment, their frustration, or their response. So, we just say yes, so we don't have to feel uncomfortable.

So, who are we really pleasing at the moment? And are we really pleasing anybody? Because if I say yes to someone about something, I don't want to say yes to, the truth then that ends up coming out towards them as resentment, frustration, irritation. I might delay something, postpone something, not deliver something, even though I said I would because I don't really want to, which translates into disappointment or makes me look bad. And then also if I say yes to something I don't want to do, then I feel bad.

So, people-pleasing is a weird expression, honestly. I think that we can love to delight the people that we love. And we can do that with love. I love the word "delight." I love that feeling of like, making a beautiful dinner and knowing that everyone who's eating it loves it. And you did it because you wanted to. I love when I take my family to Disneyland or we went to Hawaii this summer. I love when we do that. I love saying yes to that because I love to do that and experience their delight. I'm not giving anything up of myself to create that. I love to say yes when it's a "hell yes." I learned that from my friend, Brooke Castillo so long ago, I'm still learning to say no when it's "hell no," or even like I'm still practicing that.

So, as women who lead companies, you can see how incredibly important this is, right? Because as your business grows, you're going to have more and more people in your company who have opinions, who have things they want, that are unique from why you even started the company. So, people can come into your business and they can have all these ideas about what you should do with your business. And then you feel like you should say yes to make them happy.

But really, you're just not wanting to experience the discomfort of finding a leadership voice here that says, "Thank you for your idea, we're not going to go in

that direction. And here's why: it's not personal. I don't want to, it doesn't align with the vision. It doesn't align with our strategy." But when we don't develop our leadership voice, our internal confidence to take responsibility for what we really want, we acquiesce, say yes, and then resent it. So, ultimately people-pleasing is kind of like avoiding or ignoring an emotion, which is usually discomfort, disappointment, fear.

And the other side of that is people-controlling, people-demanding, people-depleting. These are what these are, moments where you don't care if it upsets people, you don't care, you want other people to change their behaviour so that you could be pleased. Stop playing that music so loud, stop drumming your fingers on the desk, stop whatever, right?

I give my husband a hard time because he whistles. He listens to my podcast every now and then, he'll probably get a kick out of this, right? We do this at work, right? "Stop this, do that. Fix those mistakes. Don't make mistakes. Don't be late. Don't put your job. Don't be that," right? Like we do this with people and we want to control them so we feel better. It's the same thing. I don't want to feel an emotion. I'm avoiding an emotion. I'm ignoring an emotion and I'm focusing on your behaviour to change so that I can feel better. And really, in its most extreme and kind of ugliest form, we probably don't like the language of, we are manipulating other people so we feel better.

And so, what's the alternative? Because in *How to CEO*, a huge part of learning how to lead is understanding human behaviour. It's really becoming a student of behaviours, yours and others, and understanding why we do what we do. The better you get at that, the easier it becomes to find your voice and presence and honour the voice and presence of others and to not take things personally, not perceive everything as a personal attack.

If everything that happens in your company, that doesn't go the way you want is personal, then no wonder you want to control the heck out of everyone you like, but it's not personal. And what you don't want is a team of people-pleasers, who are lying to you, saying yes to you because they're afraid. Because guess what the backlash of that is: resentment, anger, frustration, and lack of loyalty. So, we have

to be honest and the best place to always start is with you. So, you can start by just being honest with where you say yes when you really mean no.

And why are you saying yes, and do not make it about the other person? “Well, I had to say yes because I didn’t want to disappoint them. I had to say yes because I didn’t want them to think I was...” No, let’s just take it.

Let’s say I chose to say yes, because I didn’t want to feel bad if they were disappointed. I chose to say yes, because I didn’t want to think I was a bad person. Just take responsibility, it’s not a bad thing. And allow yourself to just feel that. It’s okay to feel disappointed. It’s okay to think, “Ooh. It’s okay to grow through and out of habitual patterns of yes to find a voice of yours that is you, not some version of you. I just read this thing before like, “That was Season One of me. If you met me in high school or college, that was Seasons One and Two.”

I think the quote said, “We didn’t have a very good writing team yet,” or something like that. So, every season we get better writers, we get more clarity. Assuming we are on this journey of development and understanding ourselves. And I think there’s no bigger ask of you if you step into leadership than that, it’s like parenting, you don’t get a choice. Well, I guess you do. I mean, some people step into the leadership roles and never advance who they are. They stay exactly who they are and they, whatever, through the cult of personality or force, they drive other people to change so that they can be successful and you know that exists because we see it happening. And I would a hundred per cent stay away from those people all day long—no awareness, no interest in awareness, and the only thing they’re interested in is other people doing what they want so they can get what they want.

That’s not a collaborative leader, but I want to really invite you to examine what I think are two very common phrases that women who lead and women in general say, which is, “Oh, I know I’m just such a people-pleaser,” or “I know I’m such a control freak.”

Both of those identities come from your belief in yourself that you can’t handle discomfort, the discomfort of a no, when you mean it, discomfort of other people’s mistakes, other people’s choices, other people’s errors, other people’s behaviours.

And so, you work on either side of that spectrum to either over accommodate so you can avoid a feeling or over control so you can avoid a feeling and as common as all that is, it's no wonder that we're all just constantly worried about what each other thinks about each other because we're all trying to gyrate and put ourselves in contort and do all these weird positions just to make sure you think something about me. I don't get to decide what you think about me. I don't want that job, I can decide what I think about me, myself, but we have to grow out of patterns because when we don't decide to find our own voice, it does affect the way our businesses are run.

We hire people we don't want to hire. We say yes to ideas we don't really want, we keep people longer than we know we should. We build jobs for people because it's what they want. We pay people, the salary that they tell you, they want, we do things to make other people happy and we're not gauging that through sound business judgment. We're doing it because we don't want to feel uncomfortable by saying no.

Or if someone's got behaviours that are really challenging or they keep making mistakes that are really affecting the business, explaining to them: "When you do this at work, it's disruptive to all these other people. It is not aligned with our values. We have to find a way for that to stop or this may not be the right place for you," but we're not going to make them different. That's their business. We just say, "Hey, this isn't working here, would you like to work on it?" Not trying to control them into someone that they aren't.

So, I know this is a strong topic, and I also know it's incredibly loaded for so many of you, but I want you to think about those two sides of people-pleasing. There's you overhear pleasing others saying no, when you mean no. And there's you over here directing demanding and controlling others and they're very similar. It's to avoid feeling some form of discomfort. And what if instead, we just decided, I can actually feel discomfort, I can say no. I can allow you to be who you are and help you understand how it's not aligned with what we do here. And I don't have to swing in these triggers.

I think of a lot of people when they think about learning how to lead and manage people, assuming it's incredibly tactical. It's, you know, here's the job posting,

here's how to interview, here's how to write a training plan, here's how to do a performance review. And listen, you have to have all those pieces and parts, but if you don't understand yourself, communication, human behaviour, motivations, all of that falls flat, and you can't process people. You have to understand them and we have to be able to move with them.

And if we over-attach to who they are and how they are personally, we lose our objectivity as a leader, we can't lead with our opinion. We have to lead with understanding and curiosity, and that's with ourselves as well as others. And that's why I know what we do in my program and How to CEO is so unique because we don't just give you the answers, we teach you how to arrive at your own. And this one, people-pleasing, it's a big one. You get this figured out, it'll change your freaking life. I'll talk to you again next time.

Hey, entrepreneur, you started that gorgeous business of yours to do some real good in the world. You probably didn't start your business to manage people, but here you are, having to figure out how to manage people to get work done. And maybe it's not going so well. So, head on over to [www.krisplachy.com/howtoceo](http://www.krisplachy.com/howtoceo) and let's talk about how we can help you learn how to lead, manage, hire, fire, and all the things so that you can build a team that expands on your amazing dream.