

Safety Strategies vs. Expansive Strategies for Over-responsibility

Here is a list of safety strategies we often use in common situations. Paired to each safety strategy is one expansive strategy; you can likely think of others you might employ.

Safety Strategy	Expansive Strategy
Say yes to things you feel obligated to do.	Say no to obligation for a day/week/month.
Ask what others want to do/eat/talk about.	Say what you want to do/eat/talk about.
Remind others what they forgot.	Let others learn from their own mistakes.
Fill in for others' lapses.	Let others do things themselves.
Poll others' opinions before expressing yours.	Give your opinion/risk others' disagreement.
Remind loved ones to "drive safely."	Drop superstitious behaviors.
Make excuses when you disappoint others.	Don't explain yourself when it isn't called for.
Defend position when saying what you want.	Say what you want without justifying yourself.
Prioritize others' needs over your own.	Prioritize your own needs three times per week.
Listen patiently when others bore you.	Initiate a topic of interest to you.
Give high-pressure salesperson attention.	Resist a high-pressure salesperson.
Show others how they can do things better.	Don't point out anything to anyone for one day.
Provide solutions to others' problems.	Listen with compassion; don't problem solve.
Step up to compensate for others' failings.	Don't assume others' workload.
Work overtime whenever you're asked.	Make overtime an exception to the rule.
Make yourself available in case you're needed.	Plan fun, healthy activities for your free time.

Just as important as changing behavioral strategies is changing mental safety strategies, like reviewing and worrying over other people's problems when you are away from them. Remind yourself that you cannot control how others live their lives. Then focus on your own self-care, putting your higher brain to work on some of your own needs that you've been neglecting.

Safety Strategy	Expansive Strategy
Think about others' problems when alone.	Purposely focus on self-care.
Worry about other people's problems in an attempt to fix them.	Set aside Worry Time.
Compulsively say prayers in an attempt to keep others safe.	Resist compulsive praying and allow for uncertainty.
Review in your mind what you could or should have done differently to help someone.	Interrupt this review by accepting the possibility that you made mistakes.