



The Power of "No"

Think You Can LLC
Karen Karsten CPCC, ACC

- It is so important to say "No" these days - because **until we learn to say "No" we continue to be stressed and overwhelmed with too much to do in not enough time.** And isn't it usually our priorities (eg. our ideas, health, quality time with self or family) that suffer?
- Interestingly, most children go through a phase where their favorite word is "No". That's because **No is a power word.** It gives a **definite sense of self.** And this means that saying "No" is also an ideal opportunity to **rediscover your sense of who you are!**
- So, whether you learn to say "No" more often, or just learn to say "Yes" on your terms, release yourself from the burden of pleasing others and give yourself **more time and freedom** to do what matters to you. So let's get started!



When is it OK to say "No"?

You **ABSOLUTELY MUST** Say "No":

- When you're stressed or overwhelmed
- When you're already doing too much
- When you're tired or sick

And **REMEMBER**

You always **HAVE A RIGHT** to Say "No":

- When it's someone else's issue
- When it's something you don't want to do
- When there's something you'd **MUCH** rather do
- When it takes away from your values and wishes
- When you think you're taken for granted
- When you deserve or need some time to yourself

1. What in your life do YOU need to say "No" to? Just write down whatever pops into your head right now!

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2. What currently stops me from saying "No" to these things?

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3. My Beliefs about saying "No"

Just answer the questions below with **WHATEVER** springs to mind. Don't worry if you make contradictory statements (this may even be part of the problem!); just capture anything and everything that comes up for you.

People who say "Yes" are:	People who <i>DON'T</i> say "Yes" are:
People who say "No" are:	People who <i>DON'T</i> say "No" are:

What I've noticed about myself from this exercise is

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*"There are only two words that will always lead you to success. Those words are yes and no. Undoubtedly, you've mastered saying yes. So start practicing saying no. Your goals depend on it!" **Jack Canfield***



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4. Understanding the "Yes" Trap

"There is no pleasure in having nothing to do. The fun is in having lots to do and not doing it."
Mary Little

- WHY do you say "Yes" when you'd rather be saying No? How do you BENEFIT by saying "Yes"?
- Understanding this is an essential step to saying "No" - and valuing your own goals, needs and time!
- When I say "Yes" I feel
- When I say "Yes" I want other people to think I am
Examples: Perhaps you want people to like you, think you're reliable, hard-working, helpful or to make yourself indispensable?
- By saying "Yes", what am I saying "No" to in my own life?
Whenever we say "Yes" to something, we are saying "No" to something else - even if that something is simply relaxing!
- When I say "No" I feel
- When I say "No" I worry other people will think I am
- By saying "No", I could say "Yes" to these things in my life
When we say "No" to something, it's an opportunity to make room for something else that is truly important to us
- Lastly, when I say "Yes", but I really want to say "No" I feel
- My biggest fears about saying "No" are



5. The other "Know" – Know YOUR Priorities!

- How can we say "No" assertively when we don't know WHY we're saying "No"?
- Well, in order to say "No" effectively you need to be in touch with what's important to YOU - to know YOUR priorities in life. It's then much easier to say "No" because we're clear on what we want and need instead.

- What is MOST important to ME in life?
- How would I like to spend MORE time?
- Where would I like to spend LESS time?
- What is my top priority this YEAR?
- What is my top priority this MONTH?
- What is my top priority this WEEK?
- If I had a MAGIC WAND I would
- My Top 3 Priorities in life right now are? 1.
2.
3.
- How am I meeting my Top 3 Priorities in life right now?



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- **Managing the Guilt:** As you learn to say "No" more, you will probably feel more guilt! Assuming it's not genuine guilt that requires remedial action from you - CONGRATULATIONS! Choose to see this is a sign that you're making important positive changes in your life.
- **Evaluate EACH situation:** As most things in life, there is no one size fits all answer. Everything depends on the relative importance of the situation, people affected, what's going on in your life at the time, the person asking, your history with them etc.
- **Changing gradually is just fine:** If, in the past you have been a "Yes" person, you may want to gradually become a person who says "No". You may want to take your time and practice on small things, working up.
- **Soften the blow:** If you do want to go 'all out' remember that others may find this a bit of a shock. You may want to find your own way to soften it for them.
- **Practicing:** Try imagining you're someone who is comfortable saying "No" and mentally rehearse difficult situations. You can also role-play with someone you trust.
- **Feeling good:** When "No" is the right answer for you, say it pleasantly, assertively and with conviction. If it leaves you feeling strong and good in yourself (even if there is a small amount of guilt) then you have made the right choice for you!



6. Preparing to Say "No"

☛ In what SPECIFIC areas or situations in my life do I need to be saying "No" more?

1. 2. 3.

☛ My NEW BELIEFS about Saying "No" are:

1. 2. 3.

☛ The Saying "No" TECHNIQUES that I can see myself using are: (see Appendix for ideas)

1. 2. 3.



7. My "Saying No" Plan!

- If you want things to be different then you will need to do things differently - but you cannot change everything at once.
- So now, using your answers to all the questions and exercises above - and anything else you already know about yourself - identify 3 actions to get you started! Be as specific as you can!

1st Action When _____ Asks _____ Then I will _____

2nd Action When _____ Asks _____ Then I will _____

3rd Action When _____ Asks _____ Then I will _____

Now copy these out on *post-it notes* and stick them in your car, wallet, locker, fridge door, desk drawer or *any place where you will see them often.*

"Remember 'No' is just a word - and those two small letters set you free!" **Emma-Louise Elsey**



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Appendix - Tips and Techniques for Saying "No"

Helpful Tips:

- **Tell the truth:** ALWAYS find a way to be truthful - there is nothing worse than being caught in a lie. But this doesn't mean you can't leave out information (like you could reschedule an appointment so that you're available) to protect your "No"...
- **Timing can be everything:** No does not mean "No forever". Sometimes you just need time or circumstances to be right, so don't allow yourself to be pressured into giving a response if you're not ready. Sometimes you just need time to figure out if it's really a "No", a "Not now" or a "Never"!
- **Stay firm:** People who are used to relying on you saying yes will try to persuade you. Don't get drawn into discussion. Just repeat your No and have phrases ready. "I'm unavailable", "I can't right now" or "I have other commitments"

Helpful Techniques:

SIMPLE

1. A simple "No, but thanks for asking/thinking of me."

SOMETHING ELSE

2. A simple "I'm already doing / have a dentist appointment"

BUY YOURSELF TIME – when unsure how you feel or need time to prepare a response

3. "I'm away from my desk right now, can I let you know once I have my schedule in front of me?"
4. "I'm just in the middle of something/a tight deadline. Can I get back to you tomorrow/next week?"

DEFERRAL - good for other people's problems and issues

5. "I'm crazy busy this week/month. Can it wait until next week/month?"

TRANSFER - good for maintaining relationships and still being helpful

6. Suggest who else could do it, "I know John loves that kind of thing"
7. "I don't feel comfortable/have enough experience to help you with that but Sarah might be able to."

RETURNING THE NO - good for those who take advantage of your good nature!

8. "I can't do it right now - but I could show you how for yourself."

REQUESTING PRIORITY - good for dealing with your boss/when you're at work!

9. Ask for the priority. "Which one do you think I need to focus on first?"
OR "If I do this, what would you like me to stop working on?"

PRIORITISING YOURSELF - stay in control of your life and feel good about you!

10. "I'd love to help but I'm focusing on this report right now"
OR "I don't have time for anything except this proposal at the moment."