

The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

BACKGROUND:

- As adults, until we learn to say "No" we will continue to give ourselves too much to do and not enough time.
- Have you noticed that it's usually important things that get impacted by us not saying "No"? We miss out on quality time with ourselves and our families, negatively impacting our health—and our stress levels.
- Saying "No" is the ideal opportunity to rediscover your priorities and sense of who you are. That's because "No" is a power word. Most children go through a phase where "No!" is their favourite word, giving them a clear sense of self and their needs—often for the very first time.
- So, whether you learn to say "No" more often, or just learn to say "Yes" on your terms, it's time to release yourself from the burden of pleasing others—and learn to take care of you.
- You deserve the time and freedom to be, and do, what matters to you. Let's get started!

When is it OK to say "No"?

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

- ★ You're stressed or overwhelmed
- ★ You're already doing too much
- ★ It goes against your values
- ★ You're tired or sick

And **REMEMBER**

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

- ★ It's someone else's problem
- ★ You think you're taken for granted
- ★ It's something you don't want to do
- ★ There's something else you would rather do
- ★ You need or deserve some time to yourself

1. What in your life do you need to say "No" to?

Just write down whatever pops into your head below.

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

Think about what you say to yourself, what you feel, what you worry others might say, your behavioural patterns etc.



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

We must say "no" to what, in our heart, we don't want. We must say "no" to doing things out of obligation, thereby cheating those important to us of the purest expression of our love. We must say "no" to treating ourselves, our health, our needs as not as important as someone else's. We must say "no". Suzette R. Hinton

3. My Beliefs about saying "No"

Simply 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 DON'T say "Yes" are: |
|---|---------------------------------|
|  | |
| People who say "No" are: | People who DON'T say "No" are: |
| | |



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

What I've noticed about myself from this exercise is

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

4. Understanding The "Yes" Trap

- ★ WHY do you say "Yes" when you'd rather be saying No? Understanding the answer to this question is essential to saying "No"—and valuing your own goals, needs and time.
- ★ Also, we will look at how you BENEFIT by saying "Yes" when you don't want to (yes, this is possible).

When I say "Yes" I want other people to think I am
Examples include nice, kind, loving, helpful, reliable, hard-working, considerate or indispensable etc.

When I say "Yes" I feel
Write down whatever pops into your head below

By saying "Yes" to others, what am I saying "No" to in my own life?

Whenever we say "Yes" to something, we're saying "No" to something else—even if that something is simply relaxing!



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

When I say "No" I feel

Write down whatever pops into your head below



When I say "No" I worry other people will think I am
Examples could include selfish, lazy, stubborn, mean,
unreliable, inconsiderate, unkind, disloyal etc.

My biggest fears about saying "No" are

If I said "No", I could say "Yes" to the following things in my life

What you could make room for that is truly important to you?

When I say "Yes", but I really want to say "No" I feel



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

5. Know Your Priorities (the other "know")

How can we say "No" assertively when we don't know why we're saying "No"? In order to say "No" effectively you need to be in touch with what's important to you—to know your priorities in life. Then it's 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. | |
| ★ My Top 3 Priorities in life right now are: 2. | |
| ★ My Top 3 Priorities in life right now are: 3. | |
| ★ How am I meeting my Top 3 Priorities in life right now? | |



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

Some Saying "No" Thoughts to Ponder...

Manage 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! In this case, your so-called 'guilt' is a sign that you're making important, positive changes in your life.

Evaluate EACH situation: As with 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, how you feel 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". Take your time and practice on small, less important things and then work up to larger "No"s.

Soften the blow: If you do decide to go 'all out' with your "No"s remember that some people may find this surprising. It may help (although it's by no means necessary!) to find a way to soften it for them. But make sure you stay firm in your "No"—we don't want people seeing this as 'weakness'.

Practicing: Try imagining you're someone who is already comfortable saying "No", and mentally rehearse difficult situations. A powerful (and fun) technique is to 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 some guilt) then you've made the right choice for you!



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

6. Prepare to Say "No"

- Before we identify some actions, let's do a little bit of preparation.
- Simply answer the questions in each of the 3 boxes below

In what **SPECIFIC** areas or situations 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** I can see myself using are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

7. My "Saying No" Plan!

- If you want things to be different, then you will need to do things differently. And while you can't change everything at once, it's important to start somewhere.
- So, using your answers to all the questions above—and anything else you already know about yourself—identify 3 actions to get you started saying "No" more.
- You don't have to do this every time. Remember that each situation will be unique. But by planning ahead, and having a strategy, it makes it much easier to say "no" when you need to.
- Lastly, be as specific as you can! This will make each action clear, and as easy as possible to implement.

| In future, when: (write name of person) | Asks: | Then I will: |
|--|-------|--------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 | 3 |

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.

No is just a word—two small letters that set you free!
Emma-Louise Elsey



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

Appendix: Some Specific Techniques for Saying "No"

3 Helpful Tips

Tell the truth: ALWAYS find a way to be truthful. There's nothing worse than being caught in a lie. But you can leave out information (like that you could reschedule an appointment so you are 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. And don't be afraid to ask for time to figure out if it's really a "No", a "Not now" or a "Never". Extra Tip: If someone is pressuring you to give an answer, try saying: "If you need a response right now, then it will have to be a No".

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".

10 Specific Techniques

SUPER SIMPLE

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

DOING SOMETHING ELSE

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

BUY YOURSELF TIME BEFORE RESPONDING: when unsure how you feel/need time to think

3. "I'm away from my desk right now, can I let you know once I have my diary 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?"

DEFER YOUR OFFER OF HELP: good for other people's problems and issues

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

TRANSFER THE ASK: 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."

RETURN 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."



The Power of "No"

Create some blue sky in your life

Appendix: Some Specific Techniques for Saying "No"

10 Specific Techniques

REQUEST THE 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?"

PRIORITISE 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 project/my family) at the moment."

