

Learn to say “NO” and mean it!

How can you confidently respond when someone makes a request you’d prefer not to accommodate?

This article shares some ideas you can use to make sure you don’t find yourself doing something you’d very much prefer not to do.

The question has just been posed. Pause.

Was your inclination to say yes, even though there’s a voice deep down saying “no.”

Well, let’s raise the volume on that voice.

What possible reasons could there be for saying no?

- It’s beyond your means?
- It’s beyond your comfort level?
- You have no interest?

Identify all the reasons you have for saying “no.” Identify which stem from a lack of confidence, versus a sincere disinterest in fulfilling the request.

What would happen if you said yes? Perhaps:

- You would be considered a teamplayer
- It would make your boss happy
- Your visibility with higher-ups would be improved

It’s comes down to a simple cost/benefit really.

Would the discomfort involved in saying yes outweigh the benefits of possibly going along with the request?

Or, do the benefits outweigh your temporary discomforts?

The role of guilt

Saying “no” is hard for many of us.

Guilt often comes into play.

Whether this guilt has its foundation in religion, a proper upbringing, or a worldview that simply says “it’s not nice to say no”, we often recognize it and make decisions we’d rather not be making, based upon it.

Saying “NO”

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You've made the decision, after scientifically weighing the results of your cost/benefit analysis. Do you honestly say "NO?"

Well, go ahead and say it clearly, and self-assuredly...in the mirror.

Look yourself in the eye, and do it. Just say "NO."

Say it like you really mean it, and then say it again as you would to whomever made the request of you. When you pretend you're speaking to the person who made the request, does it come out differently?

Practice and experiment with different ways to say "NO" until you find one you're comfortable with.

Then go, and say "NO."

After you say "NO"

If you're used to giving in to others, then guess what?

After all that practice, you may just be surprised to find that they are not willing to accept it!

They may push, rephrase the question, or make a new, not altogether different, request.

Be prepared for this! Know your boundary—what ARE you willing to do?

Revisit the questions you asked yourself before—what would happen if you said no, or yes?

If you are serious about saying "NO" then stick to your guns.

Tell the individual making the request that you would appreciate it if they respected your wishes, and ask them to refrain from pursuing it further.

If you are comfortable expressing your "reasons why" then do so speaking from your personal perspective.

Tips on how to say your "NO!"

1. The "Wet lettuce NO"

If you are going to say NO, you must say it in a way that means NO!

Saying NO in a quiet, unassuming voice is like a hand shake that is floppy and limp.

By saying NO in a non confident manner it will make you feel as though you have got to convince the other person about your decision and the reasons why you have said it!

2. The "Mr Angry NO"

This is at the other end of the spectrum in how to say NO.

It is done in an aggressive manner and usually said with contempt.

It is not an effective way to communicate your NO.

Here are a couple of examples:

"NO. I'm not doing that rubbish. You've got to be joking aren't you"

"NO. I wouldn't lower myself to do that piece of work"

3. The assertive NO

This is the best way to say NO!

In a firm, yet polite voice say:

"No. I will not be able to do that for you"

Also, if you want to say the reasons why, keep it short and sweet.

"No. I will not be able to do that for you. I will be having my hair done at that time"

4. Use effective body language

When saying NO remember the power of non-verbal communications.

Look the person in the eye when you say the NO.

Shake your head at the same time as saying NO.

Stand up tall.

Use a firm tone in your voice.

5. When all is said and done

Don't forget that when anyone asks a question of you, you are perfectly OK to say, "Can I think about that and get back to you"

No-one should be pressured into giving an immediate answer, even if the delay is only a couple of minutes. It will give you some time to think it through and to gather your thoughts.

It will also give you some time to think about how you are going to say it, the words to use and your body language.

Saying NO exercise

Practice makes perfect as they say!

What I would like you to do for the next 7 days is to start to say NO more often.

So whether it is the double glazing salesman, the cold call, "Would you like fries with that" or the shop assistant – practice saying NO to one person for at least the next 7 days.

You will be an expert come the end of the week!

What will happen?

- You will feel much more confident and proud.
- You will find that practice makes perfect—the more you confidently say "NO" the easier it becomes.
- Others will respect your wishes and take you seriously the first time you say "NO."
- You won't find yourself doing things you never wanted to do in the first place.
- You'll have more time to focus on the things you do want to be involved in.
- The list goes on from there...

