

Saying “No”

Do you have a hard time saying “no”? Find yourself saying “yes” when you’d really rather not? When you do say “no” do you feel guilty and find yourself making excuses? If so, you’re not alone. When I went to research this topic, hundreds of articles popped up, all supporting us in learning to say “no”. A lot of them focused around women. It may be that women are more prone to “people pleasing”.

My favorite was titled “**The Gentle Art of Saying No.**” I’ve included the link below:

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/the-gentle-art-of-saying-no.html>

In the article, they identify 10 tips for learning how to say “no”. But before we look at some of those, let’s look at why it’s hard in the first place.

What’s hard for you about saying no? Are we afraid of offending someone, or making them angry? Are we afraid of disappointing them? Are we afraid they won’t like us? Or that we’re letting them down? To look at this from the other side, if we say “yes” when we really don’t want to, who are we trying to please? And at what cost are we saying yes?

We can see that a lot of monkey mind comes up when we even start to think about saying “no.” So let’s look at some ways to make it easier.

- **Prioritize.** It’s easier to say “no” when we’re clear about what’s most important to us. This is where our Life’s Intentions become important. Are we being asked to spend time and energy of something that isn’t important to us? Or that doesn’t support us in demonstrating our Standards of Integrity? If you were at our Summits this year, you saw Donna’s powerful demonstration of how necessary it is to put the big rocks into our day first. Once we’re clear about our priorities, when to say “no” becomes easier.
- **Take Your Time.** It seems to be a human need to respond immediately to a request. But the truth is, we can take our time. “I need to think about that and get back to you” is an appropriate response. Sometimes we say “yes” just to answer quickly, but when we think about it, we really should have said “no.” Notice the impulsivity (a MM symptom) when we answer before reflecting.
- **Don’t apologize.** And speaking of MM, how many of us make excuses, rationalize and justify our “no’s”? I remember learning from a friend years ago, “No is a complete sentence.” Shonda Rhimes had a great conversation with Oprah about this in this video: <https://www.facebook.com/SuperSoulSunday/videos/928433473870840/> She shared that her “no” sentence is, “No, I’m not able to do that at this time. When we apologize after a “no”, we weaken it, and leave the door open for them to keep asking. We don’t need to apologize for being clear about what is important to us.
- **Stop being nice.** By all means, be kind with your “no”. “Thank you for thinking of me, I’m not able to do that at this time.” Kindness speaks the truth in love, with compassion and consideration. Nice is about trying to please someone, or get them to be nice to you. The energy is very different.
- **Practice.** How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. ☺ If it’s downright painful for you to say “no”, practice with a friend.

It’s also important to realize that every time we say “yes” to one thing, we’re saying “no” to another. And vice versa. When we say “no” to one activity, we’re creating space for another. (For a great blog on this subject go to <http://personalexcellence.co/blog/how-to-say-no/>). Prioritizing makes our “yes’s” more obvious, and our “no’s” clearer. For instance, when Ken and I moved home to Pennsylvania, I made the decision to say “no” to full-time ministry, so I could say “yes” to more teaching and coaching. This decision was easy when I realized that teaching and coaching were my very favorite parts of ministry. This “no” also allows me to say “yes” to more time with my family and to help our children take care of their children, a definite source of joy in our lives!

When you say “no” to something you don’t enjoy, you’re clearing the space for saying “yes” to something you do. This doesn’t preclude being of service. Volunteering at something you love can be a great source of joy, and a valid reason to say “no” to something else. This is where we get to practice look, see, and tell the truth, so our “yes’s” can be authentic and our “no’s” sincere.