

3 Ways to Say NO!

Rosa Parks changed the course of history by uttering one of the wisest words in the English language: “No”. Without that little word, the civil rights movement wouldn’t exist in the same capacity as it does today.

“No” is not a bad word. Saying “no” doesn’t make you a bad person. Sometimes saying “no” to others means saying “yes” to ourselves, and to what’s really important to us. Staying true to our intentions often means saying “no” to the people and other distractions that would pull us off course. Learning to say “no” is about setting boundaries and priorities for our lives.

Because others may not know about your plans or goals, may not understand them, or may not believe in or respect what you’re trying to accomplish, it’s up to you to say “no” to the things and people that interfere with how you want to use your time and talents.

For many people, “no” is the hardest word in the English language. Yet, we can all master the ability to say “no”. So, if you’re one of those people who find the word “yes” flying out of your mouth to every request made of you – no matter how busy you are, here are three ways to turn some of those “yesses” into “nos”, or “maybes”.

- **Recognize your rights.** Recognize that you have a right and sometimes a need, to say “no” and mean it. And, since this is one of your basic rights, you don’t owe anyone an explanation. Nor do you have to apologize or defend your decision.
- **Be gracious.** Be gracious, honest, and polite with your ‘no’. Tell the truth. Don’t offer some flimsy, dishonest reason as to why you’re saying ‘no’. Although you don’t have to explain, apologize for, or defend your decision, you can soften your “no” by saying something like: “I’ll have to decline but, thanks for thinking of me.” Or, “I’m sorry, that doesn’t fit in with my focus or my schedule. Thanks for asking.” Or, “maybe”. Only say “maybe” if it’s something you’re really interested in but don’t want to make a commitment at that time. You can take graciousness to another level when you offer an alternative or suggest another person.
- **Practice.** And, keep practicing. You’ve heard the saying, “Practice makes perfect.” To some extent, that is true. Practice, however, makes permanent. Be firm, yet empathetic, polite, and honest. Make sure that your body language and voice tone are consistent with your words. When you practice saying “no” when you really mean “no”, it becomes a habit.

Saying “no” means making tough choices. At first, it may be hard. But, in the long run, you and the people who matter will honor and respect the boundaries you have set for yourself.

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