

Saying 'Yes' when you mean 'No'

Introduction

Have you considered the consequences to you or your business when you agree to do something that you don't want to do? Many people are uncomfortable about saying *no*. This article explores some of the reasons why people say 'Yes' when they mean 'No', the benefits of learning to say *no* and finishes with ten top tips on how to say *no*.

Firstly what are the consequences?

When you take on a task or agree to an action that in your heart you do not want to do, you run the risk of feeling resentment either at the time or later. Not only do you carry the feeling of resentment, you have also denied yourself the feeling of pleasure that would have accompanied the task or action if you had either agreed freely or offered in the first place!

Read this next line carefully, it is a very obvious statement but one which is often overlooked. Saying yes to something always means saying *no* to something else. By saying yes what are you saying *no* to? Your precious free time, your own work priorities, your partner, children, hobbies, the gym...



When the yes word escapes but inside you mean *no*, you end up following someone else's agenda, you are not working to your own priorities and you have put your own needs last. People who consistently put their own needs last often have lower self-esteem and confidence. By learning to say *no* you will raise both your self-esteem and confidence.

What is going on for you?

What moves you to say yes when don't really want to? Are any of these familiar?

- You say yes because you want to stop the other person from feeling upset or hurt.
- You don't want them to feel angry with you, or be disappointed in you.
- You fear being judged or criticised, so you try to avoid this by saying what you think they want to hear.
- You say yes because you don't believe that anyone else can do the task as well as you, you are the 'person for the job'.
- Saying yes means avoiding having a difficult conversation.
- You don't want to let anyone down.
- You say yes because you might not be asked again.
- You feel guilty saying *no*.

Benefits

Think of a recent situation where you said yes instead of the *no* that was screaming inside you. Ask yourself “What would you have gained by saying *no*? Would that have been of greater value than what you gained or avoided by saying *yes*?”. Remember the consequences of saying yes. When you say yes to something you are always saying no to something else. And that is okay. So long as you have weighed up the decision and are actively opting in.

What could you say yes to if you said no more often?

You will feel much more confident and proud. Others will respect your decision and take you seriously the first time you say *no*. It will get easier! You will find that practice makes perfect, start as you mean to go on. Your self-esteem will go up and your confidence will improve.

By listening to your inner voice and acting on it you will discover what is important to you. Decisions made from this position of awareness enable you to actively choose a compromise, if that feels appropriate to you. Active, rather than passive participation.

You won't find yourself doing things you never wanted to do in the first place. So you'll have more time to focus on the things you do want to be involved in. You'll get to do something that you want to do and you will be setting and following your own agenda and priorities.



You will not be depriving other people of the pleasure of solving the problem!

Despite all your best efforts you may be surprised to find that other people are not willing to accept your *no* answer. They may push, rephrase the question, or make a new, not altogether different, request. Be prepared for this! Know your boundaries, what *are* you willing to do? You don't have to make excuses, and simply restating your simple *no* answer is perfectly fine. Stick to your guns, they'll get used to your new way of living, eventually!

So what is the worst that could happen by saying no?

Top 10 Tips for Saying No

1. Remember *no* is a perfectly good answer!
2. Buy some time if you're not sure, say "Can I get back to you on that?" or "When do you need an answer?"
3. If you are already overloaded, ask someone else to prioritise the tasks you have been asked to do.
4. Do not justify your answer.
5. Remember you are saying *no* to the request not the person.
6. Practise saying *no* to easy requests.
7. Support your *no* with non-verbal assertiveness. Make sure your voice is firm and direct, look into the person's eyes or shake your head as you say *no*.
8. Start your sentence with the word *no*. It's easier to keep the commitment to say *no*, if it's the first word out of your mouth.
9. Is this your monkey? (Read *The One Minute Manager* to learn about monkeys)
10. Ask yourself, "What is the worst thing that could happen if I say *no*?"



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