

Building Positive Relationships by Saying “No”



Resilience for
Advocates through
Foundational Training

Section One: Introduction

What is a personal boundary?

(See the end of this handout for some more boundary language you might find helpful)

Visualization Tool: “Going to the Movies”

Think of a recent situation, of light to medium intensity, where you were talking to someone and said “yes” to their request when you should have said “no”, allowing one of your boundaries to be crossed. Now, imagine yourself walking into a movie theatre: getting your ticket, going to the concession stand and buying some popcorn or candy, walking down the dark aisle of the theater looking for an open seat. Once you find a seat you set your popcorn down, take off your coat, and settle in to watch.

The curtains part, the previews finish up, and finally the feature film begins: and there you and this person are, on the big screen, playing out the conversation you had where you said “yes” instead of saying “no”.

Remember, you are watching a movie, so without any judgement watch the scene play out before you and do nothing except observe yourself in the situation:

- What is happening to you during the conversation?
- How are you standing/sitting? What are you doing with your hands, your eyes, your mouth?
- What are you hearing this person say? What are you saying back?
- What are you thinking and feeling:
 - o During the beginning of the conversation?
 - o At the moment when you say “yes” instead of “no”
 - o As the conversation wraps up, after you have said “yes”

Take a few deep breaths, then write down your (non-judgemental) reactions to watching that scene play out:

Ways in which you are currently saying “no”

Accommodate: instead of saying “no” you accommodate the person. This results in a loss of your power. (I let my partner handle the budget and our money because I don’t want to fight over spending too much money on eating out)

Attack: instead of saying “no” you attack the person. This results in a loss of relationship. (I yell at my son because he consistently ignores me when I ask him to get off his device)

Avoid: instead of saying “no” you avoid the person. This results in a loss of power and relationship. (I avoid my co-worker because I am worried they are going to ask me to cover a weekend shift)

Take a few minutes to think about (and write down) how you are currently saying “no” to people in your life. Are you an accommodator? Attacker? Avoider? Some combination of the three?

Section Two: Finding your core values

(Note: there is a full “Finding your core values” exercise included at the end of this handout)

There are numerous definitions of “values” available in dictionaries, books, and across the internet. Values are a subjective concept, what one person sees as a value another person may see as irrelevant. For this exercise we will use the following definition for “Values”:

Values are any idea or theme that is important enough to you that it affects how you think, how you act, and how you feel.

Why are values so important?

- Foundations of laws, customs, and tradition
- Reflect your sense of right and wrong
- Influence your attitudes and behaviors
- Give your life purpose, meaning, and passion

Find your top 3-5 Core Values Exercise

To start discovering your core values take five minutes to scan the list of values on page 7 of this handout. When you see a value that resonates with you circle it. Take the 3-5 most important values you circled and write them below:

Questions to help you find your core values:

- How do I want to be?
- What do I want to stand for?
- How do I want to relate to the world around me?

Write down any thoughts or takeaways that come up while scanning the list and thinking about your core values:

Section Three: Yes! No. Yes?

Yes! – always begin with a “yes” first. Start your “no” with what you are for, not what you are against. Don’t be in opposition to someone else’s demand or behavior, but instead determine what you want, your core interest, and what really matters. In order to do this, you need to establish your values.

This first “Yes” is the basis for your “No”. The stronger the value (the basis for your “yes”) the more powerful your “no” will be. Uncovering your “yes” first will ground you in something positive, give you a sense of direction, and give you energy.

No. – deliver a clear “no” to the request the other person has made.

Yes? – After you have said “no,” create an invitation for a positive outcome. Tell the other person not just what you don’t want but what you do want. So, as you close one door, you may be able to open another. This second “Yes?” must be something you are comfortable and willing to do, it is not a compromise or an accommodation that will stress or upset you. In some situations, there may not be a second “Yes?” to offer.

Take time if needed: in some situations, you may not be ready or able to deliver your “Yes! No. Yes?” immediately. You may need time to think. Take a few breaths while you think, or, if needed, ask to give the person an answer later so you can take time to think through your “Yes! No. Yes?”

Yes! No. Yes? Example

A co-worker has family coming to visit and asks you to cover their weekend shifts. You promised to spend time with your partner this weekend. Using your values to craft a “Yes! No. Yes?” you tell your co-worker:

“I am sorry, family is very important to me, and I made plans with my partner this weekend (**Yes!**). So, no I cannot work your shifts this weekend (**No**). But, let me talk to my partner tonight and see if we can do something one day this weekend, and I can cover your shift on the other day. Then next weekend you can cover one of my shifts. (**Yes?**).”

Empowering your “no” – Plan B

You need to be able to follow through on your “no” even if the other person refuses your “Yes?” and refuses your “No.” You need to create a Plan B, a practical strategy you can follow that addresses your core interests and values, and you can follow without the other person having accepted your “No.”

Plan B is not a “fallback” plan – a compromise or less preferred agreement. Plan B is not another option or agreement. It is a course of action you could pursue independent of the other’s agreement, or non-agreement.

Plan B is a plan to meet your interests, not to manipulate others. You may or may not reveal the Plan B to the other person depending on the circumstances.

Plan B Example

Your co-worker tells you that working one day doesn't help. They need you to work both days or their plans are ruined. Your Plan B, if they refuse your "No." is to tell them that you are going to spend the weekend with your partner then. Following through on this plan does not require their acceptance of your "No," you can spend the weekend with your partner with or without their agreement.

Protecting your relationships

When saying no you want to maintain both your power and the relationship. The "Yes! No. Yes?" formula helps you to maintain both by making your values clear to the other person, setting a clear boundary, and offering an alternative. It also shows the person that you have taken the time to listen and really think about saying "no" to them.

The more you can use the "Yes! No. Yes?" formula the clearer and more consistent your boundaries, and other people's awareness of those boundaries, will become. This will make future "no's" easier to deliver because the other person understands your boundaries better.

Don't accommodate the person and switch your "no" to a "yes". This will lead to you losing your power at the expense of trying to protect the relationship.

Don't attack the person or get angry if they push back at your "no". This will lead to you losing the relationship at the expense of keeping your power.

Don't avoid the person so you don't have to keep saying "no". This results in you losing power and damaging the relationship.

Section Four: Back to the Movies

Return to the movie theater and re-watch the movie of the situation you used at the beginning of this workshop. When you reach the point where the other person has made their request, and you are about to say “yes” enter into the scene and use the “Yes! No. Yes?” to create a new outcome:

- What are the important values in this situation you are protecting?
- What values provide support for you to say “no” What are you saying “No.” to and why?
- Tell the person your “Yes!”, then deliver your “No.”
- Now, create an invitation for a positive outcome. Tell the person an alternative (not a compromise) that you are happy to offer.

Now observe the rest of the movie and imagine how the scenario could have played out with your “Yes! No. Yes?”.

As you delivered your “Yes! No. Yes?” and watched the rest of the movie what were you thinking and feeling while:

- using your values to craft your “Yes?”
- telling the person your “Yes?”, then following up with your “No.”
- offering the person your “Yes?” (if you offered one)
- watching the person respond to your “Yes! No. Yes?”

Write down your (non-judgemental) reactions to watching this new scene play out:

Find your Core Values Exercise

Step One: Scan the Really Big List

Scan the Really Big List of Values below and CIRCLE the values that **immediately** grab your attention. Try not to pause and think about each value, circle only the ones that immediately have an impact on you.

Core Value list generously provided by Scott Epp and Abundance Coaching
www.abundancecoaching.com

Acceptance	Affection	Accomplishment	Adventure	Adoration
Adaptability	Achievement	Activeness	Abundance	Acknowledgement
Aggressiveness	Agility	Being the Best	Appreciation	Ambition
Amusement	Care	Attractiveness	Approachability	Awareness
Cheerfulness	Belonging	Assertiveness	Balance	Clear mindedness
Camaraderie	Attentiveness	Beauty	Commitment	Closeness
Celebrity	Bravery	Compassion	Contribution	Connection
Calmness	Confidence	Encouragement	Credibility	Challenge
Contentment	Entertainment	Dependability	Cleanliness	Courage
Fairness	Determination	Composure	Devotion	Family
Direction	Consistency	Dignity	Friendliness	Discipline
Creativity	Empathy	Fun	Eagerness	Curiosity
Faith	Gentility	Education	Daring	Flow
Growth	Excellence	Depth	Focus	Helpfulness
Expertise	Discovery	Freedom	Hospitality	Financial
				Independence
Enjoyment	Giving	Humour	Fortitude	Enthusiasm
Grace	Intimacy	Impact	Excitement	Holiness
Kindness	Independence	Fidelity	Honesty	Love
Ingenuity	Firmness	Honour	Loyalty	Inquisitiveness
Fitness	Hopefulness	Maturity	Intelligence	Happiness
Humility	Mysteriousness	Justice	Harmony	Imagination
Obedience	Knowledge	Health	Inspiration	Playfulness
Logic	Liveliness	Intuition	Popularity	Making a
				Difference
Mindfulness	Joy	Practicality	Mastery	Recreation
Openness	Reliability	Motivation	Reflection	Optimism
Respect	Organization	Relaxation	Passion	Security
Perseverance	Self-Reliance	Peace	Self-control	Proactivity
Significance	Power	Sensuality	Professionalism	Simplicity
Presence	Sexuality	Resilience	Speed	Prosperity
Sharing	Service	Stealth	Rest	Sincerity
Skillfulness	Strength	Solitude	Spontaneity	Success
Structure	Spirituality	Support	Thoroughness	Temperance
Thankfulness	Teamwork	Timeliness	Unflappability	Trust
Thoughtfulness	Variety	Vitality	Truth	Trustworthiness
Wealth	Vivacity	Wisdom	Warmth	Winning
Zeal				



Step Two: Transfer your circled values to the space below. Take a break and return to step three with fresh eyes and a clear mind.

Step Three: Revisit the list of values above and circle the top ten values in that list. Transfer those ten values below:



(Note: this is a great spot to use meditation spiritual practice to sit with the above values and select your top ten)



Step Four: Copy each of your top ten Core Values below, then write why this value is important to you.

1.Value:_____:

2.Value:_____:

3.Value:_____:

4.Value : _____:

5.Value:_____:

6.Value:_____:

7.Value:_____:

8.Value:_____:

9.Value:_____:

10.Value:_____:

Step Five: After writing out why each value is important to you, circle the values that now feel most important and transfer them to the next page.

Step Six: Write each of your remaining Core Values below, then think about a situation in your life where you needed to make a choice. Write out why this Core Value was important in making that decision.

1.Value:_____:

2.Value:_____:

3.Value:_____:

4.Value:_____:

5.Value:_____:

Step Seven: Looking at your remaining Core Values above and how you used those Core Values to make decisions rank these Core Values from 1 to 5 in order of how important you feel they are in your life.

This is an excellent time to use meditation or your spiritual practice to help with this decision.

List your top five Core Values, in order, below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Crafting Your Core Value Statement

Next, you want to turn this list of Core Values into a tool that you can use as a filter when making important decisions in your life. This is your Core Value Statement and you craft it by turning your Core Values into an easy to remember sentence that you can repeat, as needed, without having to reference it.

Personally, I had difficulty remembering my top five Core Values so I picked the three that were most important to me (the number three pops up in brain and memory science a lot) and used them to craft my own Core Value Statement.

Take 3-5 of your Core Values and use the space below to craft those Core Values into a simple sentence that you can easily remember whenever you need to make an important decision.

Take Action: Write your Core Value Statement

Personal Boundary Classifications (Nina Brown, Coping with Infuriating, Mean, Critical People)

Soft: a person with soft boundaries merges with other people's boundaries. Someone with a soft boundary is easily manipulated. (I like soft boiled eggs because my partner likes soft boiled eggs)

Rigid: a person with rigid boundaries is closed or walled off so nobody can get close to them either physically or emotionally. Rigid boundaries can be selective and based on time, place, or circumstances. They are usually based on a bad previous experience in a similar situation. (My rescue dog was abused by a man in a hat, so whenever she sees a man in a hat she growls and cowers)

Spongy: a person with spongy boundaries is like a combination of having soft and rigid boundaries. They will change how they set boundaries at different times, places, or situations. They are unsure of what to let in and what to keep out. (Last week I told my friend I would go for Chinese food even when I didn't want to, this week I am honest and tell them I don't like Chinese food)

Flexible: this is the ideal. The person has control over the boundaries they set and intentionally decides what to let in and what to keep out. They communicate what they want and need. They are resistant to manipulation and exploitation. (I say "yes" to my partner going out with their friends on Tuesday this week because I had no plans, but "no" to next Tuesday because I already made plans with my friends)

About RAFT

Founded in 2014, RAFT's mission is to improve the level of care for domestic violence survivors in domestic violence organizations by supporting front-line advocates in reducing compassion fatigue and burnout. The heart of the organization's work is an evidence-based behavior-change curriculum called "Live a Brighter Life", which utilizes a coaching approach for empowerment.

