



Ugh. Have you ever implied no, but really meant yes? I just lost out on a fun project because although inside I was saying, “YES, this is great!” My behavior was shouting, “NO.” Sometimes our verbal and nonverbal communication methods give off a negative impression when in fact we are very interested. We all decode and encode information differently. Some of us digest and ponder the information before we respond. Some of us respond right away without listening to the complete message. Some of us start to respond in our heads by working through lists but stop listening to the person speaking. Our communication methods may impact our success.

Yesterday, I received a call from someone interested in me for a project. She started to give details, but I stopped listening after a bit. All I could think of was my schedule and how I would juggle things around to fit this project in. (Can you guess which communication type I am?) I responded with a bunch of blah, blah, blah, “I’m busy in the morning, I’ve got to go into the city, I have to do this meeting, I think my only window of time is between 12:30 – 2:30.” After a slight pause she said, “Oh, ok, great, well, we will discuss everyone’s schedules and get back to you.” Then once more like a dog with a bone, I said, “Ok, great, but to confirm, I’m only available between 12:30 – 2:30, that should be enough time, right?” (Geez, how deep can I dig myself in?) She thanked me and said she would get back to me. Do you think I booked that project? Ah...no.

I learned a valuable lesson, so when the next opportunity comes a-knockin’, I’m going to apply these four tips to radiate, YES!

Incorporate “Yes And...” When I studied theatre, I took improvisation classes. “Yes, and” is a principle of improv whereby the actor, instead of judging and shutting down the scene with a closed response, accepts the line of thinking which opens the door to many opportunities. By accepting what another person offers, you are not only open to more ideas, you have a blank canvas for developing endless possibilities and outcomes. When you are in a conversation with someone, don’t shut it down with a close-ended response. Allow ideas to flow! Even if you don’t think something is doable, the exchange of ideas may change your way of thinking.



Lynnemagnavite@gmail.com
www.lynnemagnavite.com
773-655-2534

Check your ego and actively listen! Listening and hearing are two separate things. You can listen to someone speak, but do you actually hear what they are saying? Do you allow the person to finish a complete thought before commenting or responding? Instead of interrupting, actively listen by halting distractions, like list-making in your mind. Pay attention to the other person and allow them to finish their thoughts. Then repeat back what they said to ensure you heard correctly and respond accordingly. Active listening techniques will help focus you on the other person vs focusing solely on yourself.

Take a Breath Break. Body language and verbal response can make or break a conversation. While someone is speaking, do you cross your arms, look away or down at your phone? Even if you are interested in what they are saying, you appear to be distracted and give off a negative energy. If you talking on the phone and constantly interrupt the person speaking, again, even if you are interested, you demonstrate a lack of interest and may appear disrespectful.

If you find yourself straying from a conversation, refocus by simply taking a deep belly breath. Belly breaths are from the diaphragm and help you center and find calm. Your belly breath doesn't have to be dramatic or distracting. As you are listening, just breathe in slowly for 4 counts, hold the breath slightly and let out slowly for 4 counts, repeat. After some practice, you will get the hang of it, and be able to do it without anyone noticing. Taking a breath break will stop you from interrupting and help open your mind and body so you appear more positive.

Make a Follow-up Plan. While you are listening, you may realize that the proposed project may not be the right fit. If this is the case, you can still appear positive while you take time to figure things out. After the person finishes speaking, and you are apprehensive, say that you will think about it and get back to them by an assigned date/time. This way you show interest and the person will still keep you in mind. But don't forget to follow up! If it isn't the right fit, be honest and explain why. Saying no when it is indeed a no is important. At least you arrived at the decision in a way that leaves the relationship open for another opportunity down the line.

We all have our own ways of communicating. However, we shouldn't be set in our ways. Communication is fluid – we can change and adjust based on the situation, the person and the conversation. Don't limit your opportunities by appearing to say no, when you really mean yes!

Lynne Magnavite is a Trainer, Speaker and life-long learner. Lynne's passion is to connect, collaborate, and spread positive energy! [Lynne's Life: An Adventure in Vlogging](#) is a series of stories and life lessons. "My life is an open book and now an open Vlog..." To further the conversation, email lynnemagnavite@gmail.com.



[Lynnemagnavite@gmail.com](mailto:lynnemagnavite@gmail.com)
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