

A short guide on Learning to say No

Change and Confidence

It takes confidence in yourself to say no.

So it isn't going to happen overnight. Think of change and confidence as a muscle, like doing your bicep curls each day. So in order to develop that confidence, you will need to practice.

Practice

Start your practice saying no with someone you trust. Let them know what you are doing, it might feel odd at first and you don't want to hurt their feelings.

Or practice first by email rather than face to face, or on the phone.

Keep up that practice

Practice saying no out loud. Practice in front of the mirror, out walking the dog, or in the shower. The more you say it, the more natural it will feel.

And it doesn't have to be a shouty NO,
just a clear firm 'no'.



Prepare some statements

Have some statements, and responses you can use,
ready waiting in the wings.

Practice them, say them out loud so you are familiar with the
words coming out.

Some statement examples:

I wish I could except now isn't a good time

This isn't doable for me

Thanks for the invite though this isn't something I can do right now
I will have to get back to you on that

No Buts!

With these statements, your response, avoid using
the word 'but' where possible.

It can help if you think of it that you are not saying no to the person,
so it isn't personal. Most of the time, you are saying no
to a request, an ask of you.



Positive Intent

Knowing statements are being said with positive intent can be powerful and help you feel okay with the 'no'.

Saying 'it isn't a good time', as you don't have the capacity to do a good job and don't want to do something half-heartedly. It is better to let someone else who has the time to do it well.

Recognise your emotions

Start to recognise what feelings and emotions show up when you are saying yes but wanting to say no.

You might feel regretful or guilty or fear. Start to get curious about yourself. Ask yourself why you are feeling this. Is it coming from a place of rejection, missing out?

Identify your thoughts

Identify the thought, the thinking before the feeling. If you are feeling afraid, your thought process could be, "I might be rejected next time", this then leads to the fear of missing the opportunity, so your response, your behaviour is that you say 'yes' instead of saying no.



Provide an explanation

It might help you to provide some sort of explanation in your answer.

“I can't manage it this time although please do consider me another time as I am really interested in other opportunities when I have more time.”

Do you use the word 'should'?

You might find yourself thinking ‘I should do this’, and therefore say ‘yes’. If you catch the word ‘should’ coming into your thoughts, this is often an indicator of some childhood patterns or beliefs that you are holding on to that aren't necessarily helpful.

Stop making assumptions

We all make assumptions about each other.

If you are assuming the other person is going to be disappointed or angry or upset because you have said no to something, check with them.

Ask them.

You might be pleasantly surprised.



If your assumption is right?

That's okay too.

If they do say they are disappointed, then you can provide them with your reason, your positive intention, for saying no.

Acknowledge they are feeling disappointed but keep firm with your 'no'.

Are you a People Pleaser?

When we are put under pressure, or in stressful situations, our dominant driver will often show up.

If your dominant driver is pleasing others, you are going to have values such as being considerate, kind, and providing service. You might have internal thoughts saying, "don't be assertive, don't say no".

What to do?

If you recognise this in yourself, work on accepting responsibility for what happens to you and what you are doing for others.

It is about taking ownership of your actions and developing your own autonomy.



Understand your values

Understanding your values, and what's important to you, is helpful when learning to say no.

If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable when you are saying yes, but really wanting to say no, it could be that one of your core values is not being met.

What you can gain by saying no

Ask yourself if you are saying 'yes' to this, what else are you saying 'no' to? What are you giving up?

It could be reading your children a bedtime story, going to the gym, having supper with your partner, going for a walk, or completing a piece of work that is important to you and you have a deadline for.

So, by saying no...

Think about what you are gaining.

If you've found my Learning to say No guide useful, I'd love to hear from you. It's great to connect with people & hear their feedback - see contact details below.

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