

“NO” is a Complete Sentence: Healthy Boundaries, Happy Life

Grammatically speaking, “NO” is an answer to a question, and as a result, is often considered to be a complete sentence. As a result, it doesn’t really need further explanation, but often times people feel compelled to give an answer because they either (1) feel a pressure to offer one, OR (2), out of kindness, they want to give some sort of explanation, because they believe they would be rude if they didn’t. This has been SUCH a dilemma for some of my clients, that as part of my coaching packages, I have written “cheat sheets” so they know exactly *how* to say no in a way that makes them feel comfortable. But as awkward as this can be, its important to understand that establishing healthy boundaries for yourself, personally AND professionally, is important not only for your OWN state of mind, but ultimately, for your own happiness.



Step 1: Learn a Lesson from the Men! That is right ladies – you heard me right! HERE is where we can learn an important lesson from the gentlemen out there – I have seen them in action, and have admired their ability to not only say no, but I have also admired the fact that rather than filling that awkward silence with any other explanation, they stand their ground. For a variety of reasons, the ladies seem to struggle more in this area, and so let’s take our inspiration from the men, and FINALLY realize that we have got to stop thinking that someone ELSE’S discomfort, is more important than our own. Now that doesn’t mean that you never consider how your actions might impact someone else, but if you delve below the surface, and discover that you are constantly putting someone else’s comfort level ahead of your own, you’ve got to draw the line.

Step 2: Bust Through Your Negative Beliefs. This is a VERY important next step because if you don’t start busting through any negative and/or guilt-ridden beliefs you may have about saying no, you run the risk of caving into pressure. If/when that happens, two things can be the result: (1) you start getting resentful of others and (2) you start getting disappointed in yourself. Remember that *turning* someone down is NOT the same as *letting* someone down, and sometimes it’s easy to confuse the two, especially if your go-to-response is to want to help people. But there is a reason the saying “helping can be hurting” is a popular one - if you do for others what they should be doing for themselves, you are not ultimately helping them. You are instead creating a type of entitlement – it’s NOT “their world and we are all just living in it.” You have to respect other peoples points of view, and if your family, friends, and/or co-workers expect you to constantly drop things at a moment’s notice to help them, then you are not teaching them to respect you OR your time. Just remember that YOUR time, and what you choose to do with it, is JUST as important as anyone else’s.

Step 3: Boundaries = Self-Love. Establishing healthy boundaries at work and at home leads to a happy life for one simple reason: you can feel, from the inside out, that you have stood up for yourself, and that you are taking care of yourself. When I was a single mom, this could be a struggle, because without meaning to, I would overcompensate for the obstacles my daughter might face/pain that life might throw her way. But I also knew that I didn’t want to raise a child that thought things were owed her – I wanted her to be respectful of others and work hard, rather than expecting things to be handed to her, so by establishing healthy boundaries and holding her accountable, I could do just that. I was also showing her that “no meant no” and that trying to pressure me to change my mind might work some of the time when it was reasonable, but when I drew that line in the sand, she was going to have to respect it. Today, she is a happy, independent, go-getter who is seeing the world, as she serves her country in the military, and I know I played a big part in helping her become the fierce, independent young woman that she is today. She is a force to be reckoned with, who knows how to draw her OWN lines in the sand, and she not only expects those lines to be respected, but she also respects those same boundaries in others.