

CHOOSE TO THRIVE



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**'NO' IS A
GREAT WORD**

'No' Is A Great Word!

When we say yes to others, who are we really saying no to?



by [Rob Duffy](#) on December 27th 2017

Have you ever said yes to somebody when they requested a favour or when they looked for you to do a task, even though a part of you didn't want to do it?

What conclusions have you come to for the reason you said yes? Did you really want to do that task or favour that was being asked of you? Did you do the favour and feel resentful all the while when you were performing the task?

Do you think you might have a problem with saying no sometimes? How often do you say no compared to saying yes to people? Babies are really good at asserting their preference and say no very often. So why is it that so many adults lose this ability when they grow older?

I know it's hard to calculate the reasons for all the various people we say 'yes' rather than 'no' to, this can be difficult but let's think about some of the reasons we might say yes to people. And, I invite you to consider if any of these reasons have applied to you in the past.

The desire to 'people please'

This is very common as we all want to get on people's good side and be considered a good person. This doesn't mean that we have to become slaves to their preferences, though.

‘What will they think of me if I say no’; ‘I want them to be happy with me’. These are common thoughts which can come into our minds in a split second and we find the words ‘yes’ flying out of our mouths to appease a person’s desires.

Fear of hurting someone’s feelings

You are not responsible for other people’s feelings. We are only ever responsible for our own feelings. This is not to say that we should not take into consideration how others will react to our behaviour, but we are not bound to other people’s preferences, as our own self-interest is of primary concern.

If we allow others feelings come before our own, what type of message does that send to our subconscious and to other people about the type of person we are? Are we being assertive or a ‘walkover’? ‘I don’t want to disappoint them’ or, ‘I’m afraid I will hurt their feelings’, are the type of thoughts that might flash into conscious awareness and these need to be challenged.

Why are others preferences superseding your own? What reasons immediately come into your mind regarding this? List any of these reasons below.

Feeling guilty

If you feel guilty about prioritising your own needs over the needs of others its time to ask yourself a few questions and get clear on what is going on for you.

If this is true for you, some questions to consider are;

- 1) Are the commitments I make to other people leaving enough time for my own needs and goals?
- 2) Is it really selfish to say no to other people's requests?

3) Do I make requests of other people as much as I take on commitments which other people request of me?

4) Is it a realistic strategy to attempt to please everyone based on a tendency to feel guilt and bend to their requests?

5) Do I view saying no to somebody as a negative thing, if so, why is that?

6) Is my tendency to say yes based on my own undervaluing of myself and potentially based on self-esteem issues?

7) Have I got a tendency to be manipulated by the requests people make of me?

Caught by surprise

Perhaps a person catches us leaving a room and asks us a question that we are unprepared for and we answer in the affirmative because we are in a rush.

Or maybe we have just come into a new social situation and we have not been warmed up to the environment and someone asks us a tough favour

to which we are surprised and feel we don't have time to pause and consider and we agree to the proposition.

Deferring to an authority figure

When we are young many of us are taught to obey our elders and any of the adults we come into contact with. This lesson can be subconsciously brought with us into adulthood and deference to any and all authority figures can be a pattern we see in ourselves.

If you notice this is a pattern for you, decide to challenge an authority figure in a non-confrontational way.

Maybe bring up something and deliberately disagree with them and notice how you feel about the interaction to see if any of those sentiments exist within you.

Obviously, don't do anything which could jeopardise a job or a position in an organisation.

Examples of assertively and effectively responding 'NO'

1. A birthday collection for a lesser known work colleague which another workmate asks you to contribute to. This is a tricky situation but this calling for a contribution as a gift often feels like an obligation. You are free to say that you wish to give your personal well wishes privately. This will gently take the pressure off and let the person doing the collection know that you are going to do it in your own way and they will likely cease to pressurise you to contribute.
2. You get an offer for a job you don't want from your boss. While this could be a lucrative offer, the workload is greater and responsibilities are more tedious than you have an appetite for at present. You can graciously say that you appreciate the offer but that at the moment you are not in a position to take on the role. Maybe when your personal situation changes in a years time, you might be in a position to consider

such a role. Expressing your personal situation allows your boss realise that your priorities take precedence and a good boss will respect this. Saying no to things you don't want, is saying yes to things you do want!

3. You are asked by the community committee for the umpteenth time to coach the children's football team. You see that other parents are equally, if not more capable of fulfilling this task. You can be honest and say that you are not going to do this again this year because you fear that you will end up feeling resentful performing the role and which in turn, may lead to a diminished enjoyment for the children. The time has come for another parent to step up and take responsibility. Saying no, in this case, allows for others to step up to the plate to say yes.

Saying no to yourself sometimes might be the greatest challenge. Maybe you indulge your

desires to spend money when you really should be saving money. Whatever your challenge is with saying no to people, the following questions might help you to uncover some of the patterns that have taken hold of you. This is the beginning of the process of changing these habits and beginning to say yes to yourself more often!

Exercise

Can you recall 3 examples when you said 'YES' but on reflection, you would have preferred to say 'NO'?

If you could have those moments back now, how would you have acted differently?

Also, why do you think you said 'YES' on those occasions?

What was the trade off for yourself?

What disservice if any did you do to yourself by saying 'YES'?

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