

Four Ways to Say “No” and Still Feel Like a Decent Person

Pam Vaccaro, MA, CSP

During the busy holiday season you might have said to yourself, “Next year I am just going to have to say “no” more often. Here are a few ways to say “no” while preserving good will all around.

Know what you want to say YES to in your life. Have you considered how you really want to spend your time and focus your attention? It is easier to say “no” when you are clear about what you really want to say yes to.

The nice no. “I’m going to have to say no to your request, but I thank you for asking.” This kind of “no” offers no explanation or talks about “not having enough time” (actually no one cares if you don’t have the time—neither do they).

The conditional no. “I can’t help you out this month, but I will serve on your committee after the first of the year.” This kind of “no” assumes you have your priorities and schedule very clear in your mind and also gives the other person a chance to negotiate with you.

The considered no. “I’m going to need to think about your request. I will let you know by Monday afternoon.” This is a very, very useful kind of “no”. It gives you time to consider request in light of your priorities, but also respects the other person by presenting a deadline.

The assisted no. “I really can’t help you out on this, but let me talk to two other people who I think will be very glad to serve on your committee.” This popular “no” takes your time, but also enables you to be helpful. Most of us want to assist another person. We just don’t have to be the one to complete the original request.

Give yourself the gift of “no” so that you can say “yes” to more of what you want to do with your time and life.

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