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How to Set Boundaries and Say No

By Joy Fisher-Sykes

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We are constantly bombarded daily with requests for our time. While helping others can be very rewarding, at the same time we can feel distraught about constantly obligating ourselves to others while not fulfilling our own needs. We can feel distressed about constant commitments to do things we simply don't have the time, energy or desire to do.

At times, we may immediately feel the urge to say no, but instead lose our courage, and concede yet again. The question is why? Is it because:

- * You fear you won't be liked or feel a strong need to please everyone
- * You have to always keep the calendar full so you feel needed and important
- * You undervalue the need for down time and forget simply not wanting to do anything is a legitimate reason to say no
- * You would rather not deal with the consequences of saying no and all the feelings that come with it.

Setting boundaries and saying no is taking personal responsibility for your well-being. This requires you to clearly speak up, and specifically ask for what you want. Your decision to say no to requests from family, friends, and co-workers doesn't have to be filled with feelings of uneasiness and guilt. In fact, it's important you remember the decision to say no is strictly a personal choice - yours!

Whether at work, with family, or friends, you can say no with diplomacy, tact, and respect. Here some ways you can embrace your personal power and assert your right to say no.

Be sure you have all the facts

Before making a commitment, be sure you have a complete understanding of exactly what's being asked of you. You may feel confused because you just don't have enough information to make a decision. You have the right to ask as many questions as necessary.

Ask yourself "Is this an unreasonable request?"

When someone makes a request, he or she is usually tuned into "WIIFM" (What's In It For Me). People

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are not necessarily concerned with whether or not a request is in your best interest. If you feel hesitant, trapped or otherwise uncomfortable - go with your gut and say no. These uneasy feelings probably indicate saying yes isn't best.

Take Your Time

There is no law that says you have to immediately obligate yourself to someone when asked. Take your time before you make a final decision. Simply say "I need time to think about this. I'll get back to you."

Set goals

Setting your goals will make it easier to say no. Establishing priorities makes it easy to decide how much time you can devote to others without sacrificing your own needs. You will be more comfortable

declining requests that conflict with your priorities.

Speak up – without excuses or apologies

When you have all the facts and decide say no, say no calmly and firmly. An assertive tone of voice, body language, and eye contact lets others know you are serious and definite in your decision.

Don't be meek. Say no directly without excuses. Excuses make you appear as if you aren't in control of your decisions. If you say "I'm sorry but..." this only weakens your stand. If you have decided saying yes is not in your best interest, no apology is necessary.

What if they won't take no for an answer?

If someone won't take no for an answer, repeat your position. Maintain your stand and don't allow yourself to be manipulated or strong armed. No means no and you have the right to stand by your choice.

Feel good about your decision to say no

Feel calm, confident, and comfortable with your decision to say no. Be secure knowing it's enough to say no simply because you just don't want to.

Remember, learn how to say no is a win-win situation for everyone.

Joy Fisher-Sykes is a professional speaker, author, and success coach in the areas of leadership, motivation, stress management, customer service, and team building. You can e-mail her at <mailto:jfsykes@thesykesgrp.com>, or call her at (757) 427-7032. Go to her web site, <http://www.thesykesgrp.com>, and sign up for the newsletter, OnPoint, and receive the free ebook, "Empowerment and Stress Secrets for the Busy Professional."

So What's Your Excuse?

By Maria Marsala

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I'm not sure what the history of "excuses" is, except to know that a majority of the time excuses equal some sort of self-dishonesty.

They're part of what we thought we "should do" vs. being a "must do"! Excuses come from us not being able to take our own "no's". They're what we say to people so that we "don't hurt their feelings". Excuses are what we say so that others don't hurt us. Excuses are part of what we're tolerating in our life (that which draws out our energy and squashes it)!

Excuses come back to haunt us unless we look at them as gifts from clients or friends or ourselves. Have you ever received an excuse for "something" and thought — Is that person kidding with that excuse? Why didn't they just say NO? OH! ... I am doing the same thing to "so and so".

Say NO!!! Sometimes saying "NO" to someone means saying "YES" to someone even more important — YOU!

What can you do when you give someone a "no" that they don't accept? Take the time to think about what type of answers you can give and things you can do to protect your boundaries so that you can raise your standards. Check out these Top Ten Lists about boundaries. They are just wonderful! "Things to say pleasantly when people attempt to invade your boundaries" by Coach Diana Robinson www.topten.org/public/BG/BG1.html and another wonderful Top Ten by Coach Dennis Tesdell www.topten.org/public/BN/BN1.html

Integrity Lesson

This month, write down all the excuses you hear yourself giving others and giving yourself. Look for the patterns. Are you not setting boundaries? Are you setting boundaries and the person isn't listening? Are you setting boundaries and you're not enforcing those boundaries? Or what other patterns do you see.

And remember: Yes, No and Maybe are all complete sentences!!!

Maria Marsala, Business & Life Coach—Consultant. Maria works with successful individuals as they take

their success to an even higher level. Subscribe to "Helping You and Your Business Grow" our free weekly online newsletter or download our serenity cards at <http://www.CoachMaria.com/ebook/download.html>



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