



Golden Talk Series

Saying No



Part 1: What do we mean by saying 'no'?



Have you ever found yourself **overwhelmed**, **stretched thin**, or struggling to maintain your well-being because you couldn't say no? The power of this simple two-letter word, 'no,' can be a transformative tool in our lives. Saying no is not about being negative or selfish; it's about **setting boundaries**, protecting our time and energy, and prioritizing our well-being. In a world that thrives on constant demands and expectations, learning to say 'no' is one of the most empowering things we can do to **reclaim** our time and prioritize our own needs and well-being. Learning to **break free from** the prison of saying yes and **embrace** the liberation of saying 'no' is essential.

Part 2: Why is it important to say 'no'?

Helping others is great, but you have limited resources. You have limited time, money, and energy **at your disposal**. If you keep saying 'yes' to people, you may end up **putting their priorities ahead of your own**, which will make you feel overwhelmed, miserable, irritated, and cynical over time. It's essential to learn to say 'no' for this and a variety of other reasons:

1. There will always be people who appreciate your help, but that doesn't make you responsible for their problems. Remember: Your main responsibility in life is to take care of yourself and those who rely on you.
2. Research shows a strong connection between the struggle to say no and an increased likelihood of experiencing stress, **burnout**, and even depression.
3. Saying 'no' is a game-changer when it comes to productivity. Efficiency and productivity **are at odds with** having too many **commitments**. You can't get much done if **your plate is already full**. That's why it's important to learn to say no and stop **taking on** more tasks than one can realistically complete.
4. By **narrowing your focus** and reducing your workload, you will be able to give your **undivided attention** to a few key tasks and improve your performance.
5. It's better to be honest and say 'no' when we genuinely can't follow through. Sometimes, saying 'no' can save us from future misery and **spare others from** disappointment. It's better to decline a task than to **promise and not deliver**.



Part 3: Why do we find it difficult to say no?

- Sometimes, we find it hard to say 'no' because we value the relationship deeply.
- We might say 'yes' to avoid confrontation.

- We all hate to let others down, especially if they're friends or loved ones.
- We may keep saying 'yes' because we are **people pleasers**. We don't want to disappoint others by breaking our image of a superhuman or a **lifesaver!** For example, as a sociable person who always helps others in need, you may hear a subtle ego that telling, "I must help no matter what."
- Fear often guides our decision when we say 'yes.' We know that 'no' is the right answer, but we keep asking ourselves questions that make us doubt this decision. Will I be risking my job if I say 'no'? Will he think I'm useless? Will I lose potentially interesting opportunities? The fear of missing out on *something* pushes you to say 'yes' to *everything*.



Part 4: What are the consequences of always saying 'yes'?

- When we're always saying 'yes', the weight of all the commitments we've made starts **taking a toll on** our mental and emotional well-being, **dragging us down**. We feel like we're being squeezed into a pressure cooker, with loads of stress **piling up**.

- All those tasks, projects, and activities that come with saying ‘yes’ to everything can feel like an **avalanche**. **They come crashing down on us**, leaving us exhausted, drained, and unable to give our all to each task.
- Another problem is the weight of **sky-high expectations** coming from others. When we keep saying ‘yes’, people tend to **expect the moon** from us, burdening us with more demands and responsibilities.
- Saying ‘yes’ to everything **throws us into a whirlwind of** stress. We rush from task to task, making people wait, ignoring calls, and struggling to finish things properly. This cycle can harm our work performance, leading to poor results that could damage our reputation and relationships.



Part 5: How to say ‘no’

How we say 'No' really matters. Our tone, body language, and how sure we are when we say 'No' can make a big difference in how the other person takes it. For example, if you give your manager a rude no when they assign you a certain task, it could come back to bite you with fewer opportunities for growth.

Here are some practical tips to help you master the art of saying ‘no’:

- **Boundaries matter:** Setting personal boundaries is key to confidently saying ‘no.’ Establishing boundaries shows that you value yourself and

your needs. It helps you prioritize your well-being, emotions, time, and energy.

- **Polite alternatives to ‘no’:** Instead of giving a straightforward ‘no,’ you can say:
 - "I'd be happy to help, but..."
 - "I would love to accept this task, but I'm afraid..."
 - "I wish I could do it for you, but..."
- **Avoid unnecessary apologies:** Starting with "I'm sorry, but..." might seem polite, but it weakens your stance. Be confident and **unapologetic** when guarding your time. Remember, there's no need to feel guilty when saying no; prioritize what's important to you.
- **Be assertive:** Use "I" statements to say no. Express your boundaries and decline a request or suggestion without causing unnecessary conflict or offense.
- Start with "I feel" or "I need" to express your perspective and emotions.
- Clearly state your decision or refusal.
- Provide a brief explanation if necessary. For instance, instead of saying **a blunt "no,"** you can use an assertive "I" statement like this:
 - "**I** appreciate your invitation, but **I** feel overwhelmed with my current commitments, and **I** need to prioritize my time and energy. Therefore, **I** won't be able to participate in this project/event."

In this example, you assert your feelings, explain your situation, and politely decline the invitation while still honoring your boundaries.

be at one's disposal: If something is at your disposal, it is ready/accessible for use.

Example: *I have a team of skilled professionals at your disposal to help with any inquiries.*

Similar in meaning: accessible, available, ready for use

Word family: dispose (verb), disposal (noun)

Collocations: resources at your disposal, tools at your disposal, options at your disposal.

people pleaser: someone who goes out of their way to make others happy, often at the expense of their own needs and well-being

Example sentence: *She always puts everyone else's needs ahead of her own; she is a typical people pleaser.*

Similar in meaning: Yes-man/woman, doormat [offensive]

Word family: please (verb), pleasing (adjective)

Collocation: being a people pleaser, dealing with a people pleaser, struggling with people-pleasing tendencies

unapologetic: showing no regret, shame, or remorse for one's actions, beliefs, or behavior

Example sentence: *He voiced his controversial opinion and remained unapologetic despite facing criticism.*

Word family: apologize (verb), apology (noun), apologetic (adjective), apologetically (adverb)

Collocation: unapologetic attitude, unapologetic behavior

Questions to think about

1. Do you find it easy to say 'no'?
2. What strategies have you employed to develop the ability to say 'no' confidently and effectively?
3. Can you share some personal experiences or situations where you successfully said 'no'?
4. How has your journey of learning to say 'no' evolved and what lessons have you learned along the way?
5. What are the reasons why it is important to learn to say 'no'?
6. How does saying 'no' impact productivity and efficiency?
7. What are some common reasons why people find it difficult to say 'no'? Can you add any more reasons to the ones mentioned in the article?
8. How does fear influence our decision to say 'yes' instead of 'no'?
9. What are the consequences of always saying 'yes' to requests and commitments?
10. What are some practical tips for effectively saying 'no' without causing unnecessary conflict or offense?