

# How to Say No with Grace

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*I've learned  
that people  
will forget  
what you  
said, people  
will forget  
what you  
did, but they  
will never  
forget how  
you made  
them feel.*

– Maya Angelou

Saying no can be one of the most difficult responses that we have to give in the process of daily life. But that two-letter word holds balance, priorities, values and goals within it.

## Why is it Important to Say No?

When you are caught up in a swirl of commitments, it can take a toll on your health and well-being. The added stress can cause exhaustion, sickness or leave you feeling depleted. Asking the question, “What are the most important things that I need or want to do?” can help establish healthy boundaries.

When setting your priorities, remember the most important one – YOU! Guard time for yourself as firmly as any other priority on your list.

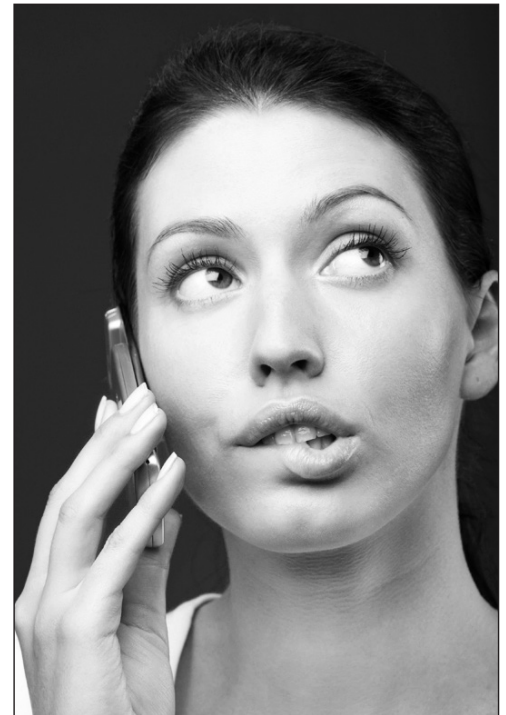
Because we have limited time and resources, we need to spend them wisely and with consideration.

## Saying No is Hard

Saying no can be difficult. Considering our needs and values, along with what is being requested, can be a delicate balancing act.

There are many reasons that it can be difficult to say no. The most common reasons include a fear of the four Rs.

- **Relationship** – Will the relationship be damaged?
- **Retaliation** – What if the consequences of saying no are costly?
- **Regret** – Will I feel guilty?
- **Reaction** – What if someone is offended or upset and has a volatile response?



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## Graceful Ways to Say No and Be Kind

When considering a request, you must first assess your priorities. Next, answer the following questions. Consider finding a trustworthy mentor who can advise you.

- Do you have the time to complete the task?
- Is it important to you?
- Does it line up with your own goals?
- What is the driving force that motivates you to answer the call or request?

The Golden Rule is one to keep in the forefront when considering requests. It is important to say no to safeguard your time. It is also important that the person making the request does not feel rejected. Start with a positive comment, affirm the importance of their request and express your regret. For example:

- Thank you for thinking of me, but unfortunately I cannot do that right now.
- I am honored that you think I am the person for the job, but I cannot do it justice at this time.
- I am able to do this part, but I am not able to do that part. Can we work together?
- That is such a good cause, but right now I have committed to this other project or task.
- I am not able to do that right now, but I will help next time.

## The Win-Win Goal

Look for a win-win solution that allows both sides to be satisfied with the outcome. If we have the attitude of consideration, we are starting out on the right track.

Think outside the box. If you are not able to do what is being asked without sacrificing other priorities, can you help in another way? For example, if you are asked to volunteer for a weekly shift at a soup kitchen but cannot do so, can you help recruit another person for that shift? Look for solutions that preserve your time and benefit both parties.

## Feel Good About Your No and Be Confident

You've made it through the hardest part! You said no with grace and kindness. At this stage, it is common to feel guilty or regretful. Before you



change your mind, ask yourself, “What were the reasons that I said no to this request?” For example, did you say no so you can spend more time with your family? Are you willing to give that up?

## Avoid Pressure Tactics and Be Firm

You may come across someone who will not take no for an answer. Repeat the original reason you gave and firmly state that you are not able to divert time away from another project or priority. For example, “My family/spouse would be very upset if I took on any more obligations.”

If the person will not accept your answer, excuse yourself and end the conversation. If you are feeling pressured, take some time to thoroughly consider the request. You do not have to answer right away.

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