



*“Every time you say ‘No’ to something that is not important or will not help you, you are saying yes to something that is important or will help you: your work, your relationships, your resources or your margin”. “Saying ‘Yes’ to everything means there is really no time for anything.”*

## Cause for Reluctance to Say ‘No’...

1. The ‘disease to please.’
2. Low self-awareness/self-commitment
3. Guilt
4. Poor time perception/management
5. Fear of confrontation or causing hurt feelings, anger or disappointment
6. The desire to protect, preserve or continue relationships
7. Wanting to sustain being perceived or reputed as someone who is, e.g., *helpful, reliable, powerful, likeable, popular, a team-player, inclusive, involved, nice. Always a ‘Yes’ person.*

## Consequences When Can’t Say ‘No’

1. Lose value. Other peoples’ priorities take precedence. ‘Acquaintances’ crowd out time for family or colleagues.
2. Lose time: for rest/recovery.
3. Lose energy & productivity: leads to counterproductive frustration, stress, overwhelmed by obligations.
4. Lose the ‘space’ to say ‘Yes’ to important matters & opportunities.
5. Burnout: Performance suffers.

## Tips & Lead-In Lines to Succeed

### Set & uphold clear, just & realistic personal & professional boundaries & priorities.

#### Boundaries & Priorities:

- Are best set with intent & honed skills.
- Need maintenance, including periodic evaluation and update.
- Provide the freedom to behave in one’s own best interest since fewer distractions and intrusions.

**Lead-In:** Thanks for asking, but as a rule, I do not...

**Lead-In:** My highest priority must be my...

### Implement a 24-hour pause period.

Gives time to scrutinize ramifications before final response.  
**Lead-In:** What an interesting project, but I need to consider my other commitments and available time to make as decision and I will tell you my final decision tomorrow.

### Speak with grace and authority.

Politely acknowledge the offer, generosity, inclusion. Do not start with an apology or ascribe blame to others.  
**Lead-In:** I appreciate you thinking of me, but I am not able to attend.

If true, encourage future invitation: What a thoughtful offer, but ....!

(Rain-check) I can’t right now, but please check with me (state a time frame)....

### Simplify your commitments. Minimize meetings.

Which ones are not value-added? What current activity must be supplanted by any new ‘Yes’?  
**Lead-In:** No, but instead of me, why don’t you consider \_\_\_\_\_?

### Create white space on your calendar.

Say ‘No’ to unnecessary events filling space.  
**Lead-In:** I enjoyed my participation in the past, but ...

### Beware of ‘shoulds.’

If it feels like a chore or a “should,” change your focus or stop doing it.  
**Lead-In:** I am flattered you would ask, but .... (your fit or interest is not right at this time)

### Practice makes perfect!

Say ‘No’ until it’s easy to say. Be repetitive with persistent people. ‘No & No’

### Personal Inventory: Say ‘Yes’ if all are answered ‘Yes’!

- Will you find this riveting or greatly enjoyable?
- Does it help me to advance personally? Professionally?
- Can my sanity withstand this?
- Am I the right one for this? The only one who could do this?
- Do I nonetheless want to do this ‘just because’?

