Many people tend to say “Yes” when someone asks them to do something they do not really want to do.

At times, it may be best to say “Yes,” such as to your boss. But often, such as with a friend or family member, it is likely to cause problems. Over time you may:

- Feel angry and resentful toward the other person.
- Feel frustrated and disappointed with yourself.
- Become highly stressed if you try to do more than you can cope with.
- Become depressed or anxious.

**Changing Your Beliefs About Saying “No”**

You may have trouble saying “No” because you have negative beliefs about doing so.

Below are some examples. Check the ones that apply to you. In the blank lines, add any others you can think of.

- [ ] It is petty and mean to say “No” about little things.
- [ ] My needs are not as important as the needs of others.
- [ ] If I say “No,” I will hurt others and make them feel rejected.
- [ ] People will think I am selfish if I say “No.”
- [ ] I should always try to please others and be helpful.
- [ ] People will not like or love me anymore if I say “No.”
- [ ] Other negative beliefs about saying “No:”

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

(continued on next page)
These beliefs may seem like facts, but they are not. They are thoughts and opinions that are learned over time.

With practice, you can change your thoughts and opinions. You may not believe the new ones right away. That is normal. It will take time for the new thoughts and opinions to become as automatic as the old ones were.

Below are some positive thoughts and opinions about saying “No.” In the blank lines, add any others you can think of.

- It is OK to say “No, thank you.”
- When I say “No,” I am not rejecting the person who is asking.
- I always have a choice. When I say “Yes” to something, I am saying “No” to something else. This is true even if I do not put it into words. (Choose wisely!)
- Others may not have as much trouble as I think they will have if I say “No.”
- Being honest helps build healthy relationships. Others may feel freer to make requests of me if they know I feel OK about saying “No.” They may also feel freer to say “No” to my requests. There will be less resentment or bitterness between us.
- Other positive thoughts or opinions about saying “No”:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

How to Say “No” With Respect

The way you say “No” is important. For example, if your words or tone of voice are rude or attacking, others may end up disliking you or feeling angry and resentful.

Being assertive means to say “No, thank you” instead of “No!” Follow these guidelines:

- Be honest but not rude.
- Keep it brief.
- Are you finding it hard to say “No”? Let the other person know.
- Be polite. For example, “Thank you for asking . . .”
- Speak slowly and warmly, so you do not sound abrupt.
- Are you angry? If possible, wait until you are calm before you say “No.”
- Do not criticize the other person. Keep in mind that others have a right to make a request.
- Show respect for yourself. Do not make excuses or give lots of reasons for saying “No.” Change “I cannot” to “I do not want to.” Keep in mind that you have a right to say “No.”
You may want time to think about certain requests. You may not be sure how you want to respond. Or you may want time to think about the best way to say “No.” Tell the other person you would like some time and when you will respond.

**Several Ways to Say “No, Thank You”**

Some ways to say “No, thank you” work best for certain kinds of requests. Below are some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Request</th>
<th>Type of No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A waitress comes up to you after your meal. “Would you like dessert?”          | Simple and direct| • Just say “No, thanks.”  
That is it.  
• Do not apologize or explain.  
• Do not engage the other person. | “No, thanks.”     |
| An acquaintance of yours offers you a drink at a wedding reception.              | Broken record    | • Repeat a simple “No, thanks” as long as you need to.  
• Do not explain.  
• Stay calm. Do not raise your voice as you repeat your response.  
• If the other person persists, move away. | “You say, “No, thanks.”  
• He says, “Oh, come on. It’s a wedding!”  
• You say, “No, thanks.”  
• He says, “But it’s free booze!”  
• You say, “No, thanks.” |
| A friend asks you to sign up for making dinner one night for a woman at your church who just had a baby. | Reflective       | • Briefly describe the content and feeling of the request.  
• Then say no.  
• Depending on your relationship with the person making the request, you may or may not want to give a brief reason. | “Thanks for taking on the job of organizing this. It will be such a great help to her. But I am going to say no. I have a lot of deadlines at work right now.” |

(continued on next page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Request</th>
<th>Type of No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A co-worker asks you to go outside with her for a smoke break.</td>
<td>Reasoned</td>
<td>• Give a brief and honest reason for why you are saying no.</td>
<td>“Did I tell you the good news? I’m quitting!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A co-worker asks you to go for a walk over your lunch break.</td>
<td>Rain check</td>
<td>• Leave room for saying “Yes” in the future.</td>
<td>“Today’s not a good day. But sometime next week would be great.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend calls and says, “Want to go out for a movie on Saturday afternoon? We have a lot to catch up on.”</td>
<td>Suggest another option</td>
<td>• Leave room for saying “Yes” in the future.</td>
<td>“That time won’t work for me. I’m taking a spinning class at the gym on Saturday afternoons. But I’d really like to catch up. Can we arrange another time?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your spouse asks you to go out for dinner at an all-you-can-eat buffet.</td>
<td>Suggest another option</td>
<td>• Say “No” but make your own request to do something else.</td>
<td>“I’d love to go out to eat. But buffets are too tempting for me. How about the Chinese place we like?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It takes time to change your thoughts and beliefs. It takes time to learn a new way to say “No.” Do your best and keep practicing. You can do it!
### Take Action

**This Week**

Use the attached worksheet. Practice saying “No, thank you,” during the coming week.

- For three days:
  - Do your best to be aware of any requests that you would like to refuse. This includes both the requests that you say “Yes” to and those that you refuse. Write the requests in the first column.
  - In the second column, write down any negative thoughts you have about saying “No” to those requests.
  - Skip the last two columns.
- For the rest of the week:
  - Fill in the first two columns as before.
  - In the third column, write down some positive thoughts about saying “No, thank you.”
  - In the fourth column, write down a respectful way to say “No, thank you.” Try it as soon as you have the chance.
- An example is in the first row.

**Staying on the Path to Wellness**

When you are ready, choose one or two tips above that you would like to put into action. Set a weekly SMART goal for each one. Write your goals here. Check the boxes when you have completed them.

- SMART Goal 1: ____________________________
  ____________________________

- SMART Goal 2: ____________________________
  ____________________________

*SMART goals are specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic, and timely. For example, “On Thanksgiving next week I will say ‘No, thank you’ when my brother asks me to watch the game on TV. Instead I will ask my niece and nephew to take a walk with me in the park.”

SMART goals help you succeed! If you have any trouble setting your weekly SMART goals, ask your health coach for help.
The information in this tip sheet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Before making changes, always talk to your doctor about what is right for you.

## A Respectful Way to Say “No, Thank You”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sandy asked me to volunteer for our church book sale.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I volunteered last year. She is counting on me. I should do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is OK to say “No, thank you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks for taking on the job of looking for volunteers. I can’t be a volunteer this year. My life is just too busy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Positive Thoughts</th>
<th>Day 1:</th>
<th>Day 2:</th>
<th>Day 3:</th>
<th>Day 4:</th>
<th>Day 5:</th>
<th>Day 6:</th>
<th>Day 7:</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Thoughts</th>
<th>Day 1:</th>
<th>Day 2:</th>
<th>Day 3:</th>
<th>Day 4:</th>
<th>Day 5:</th>
<th>Day 6:</th>
<th>Day 7:</th>
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A healthier life is on the line for you!