



The “How to Say No” mini-guide

AND FIRST STEPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR CONFIDENCE

Alessandra Patti | FindYourWay Coaching Services | April, 2018

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Thank you for subscribing to my newsletter, and, as promised, here is this mini-guide on HOW TO SAY NO. I call it “mini-guide” because I believe that saying NO is not an easy task, and therefore these would be the first steps into understanding the dynamics of why we say those too many YES in the first place, and what we exactly want to learn to say NO to.

MY IDEA ABOUT THIS MINI-BOOK

I have noticed that when it comes to confidence, none of us knows exactly where to start in order to work on it and improve it. I started with saying no and with boundaries. But I started just a few years ago! I’m glad I figured out the problem!! And supporting others who face the same problem, is just the most normal and fair next thing to do 😊

THE HISTORY OF ONE TOO MANY NOs

I was born in Palermo and, as I was growing up, I observed that my mother’s family always seemed so happy to do things for others. Me and my sister grew up in a family where there was a big contrast: my mother’s side was generous and seemed to have *endless energy*, whereas my father’s side seemed to be made of people who always had conflicts, troubles and thought a great deal about themselves. For me, when I was little, it was hard to understand the meaning behind this difference, and of course you are told that you should do nice things, that you should not be selfish, and that you should be able to treat others always nicely. Due to our catholic education (coming always from my mother’s side), we were to believe that we had to be good, otherwise you were going to be punished or something. I did not want to go to hell, certainly. Therefore, I kind of picked the side of the “good guys” and started to be a bit like my mother’s family and planned to give, give and give. Because it was a good thing.

Of course we spent time with my father’s family, but they weren’t that close, and anyways I had heard stories of how terrifying human beings they could be if they got angry (my father’s brothers, sister and cousins) and I heard they that were screaming at each other sometimes (while my mother’s family, even if still loud Italians, they whispered when things were wrong, or they did not talk at all), so I just played with my cousins, avoided thinking too much and prayed that my father’s mother would not kill us all.

It is naturally growing up that one understands the conceptual difference between the 2 families. Both my mother and my father came from very strict and old-fashioned families that taught them something similar: you have to be good at what you do, you have to study

and provide for yourself. Which is a value I am so grateful they passed onto me. The only difference was the consequence they faced if they did not obey to their families' rules: my mother was the victim of eternal silences from her parents, silences that would transform themselves into guilt of not being good enough at something; while my father was the victim of getting beaten up from time to time, in order to learn that life is tough, and you cannot do whatever you like, and you have to behave. Again, this is the consequence. The process, for my mother's case, was more: "because you are not good enough, put yourself at everybody else's service and you will get pleasure out of it", and for my father "I cannot even trust the people in my family, I better count on myself, I am going to think about myself only." What can you possibly do in both cases? That is life.

PEOPLE PLEASER:

Since behaving like a good child seemed to be more like something that my mother's family would understand better, I kind of started being a bit like that too. I wanted to have the approval of my other cousins, I wanted to be appreciated by being good at many things. It gave me a sense of happiness to be wanted by other people, and it increased my sense of belonging. Some friends at school would ask me to do their English homework, I did it. One wanted me to be go every Tuesday at her place to help her with Italian grammar, I did it. Some school people were abusive with me, making fun of the fact that I liked chocolate so much, but I did not say anything back, because hey, I cannot be excluded from their cool community! You are way too young, when you are 12, to say "I don't care about you! I can do this on my own!" – the problem comes afterwards: when you have done your early teenager experiences and you have understood that you should have boundaries with people and you start creating your own values, what makes you think that it is OK to always please people? Not everyone has good intention towards you, and sometimes, the ones that do, do not respect your boundaries or needs, simply because you haven't made it clear to them. And it is YOU and only you who is the Guardian of such thing.

It is true, everyone wants to belong to a community, it is perfectly normal no matter at what age. The point is: as you grow older and you are not a kid anymore, what are the values you believe in? What is that thing that is going to define your very existence? It is going to be something that it is so unique to you that there could be no rules about it or opinions that might change your mind. You see, common sense is indeed something common, it is what gives people a kind of direction when they want to do something, but that very value you so much rely on and excites your mind, this is only yours. This is when the TOO MANY YES do not fit any longer and we need something healthier.

THE SYMPTOMS OF THE LACK OF NO

Some people realize that they are unable to say no to somebody. You are not alone, you are not stupid! It is hard to say no, you know you want it but it is not in your blood, since, like me, you did it since you were a child. We have so many situations where we are really bad at it, but in this mini-guide I will name just a few from my own experience. Remember! It is NEVER too late to identify the symptoms:

- Lack of time. When you are going around trying to please your family, friends, work colleagues and the neighbor, you will basically do what artists do: JUGGLE and wishing you had 48 hours more in your daily routine. It is an art that it is difficult to master, because you are indeed not a circus artist! You have an occupation, you have hobbies, places to visit, books to read and lazy time to discover. Your time is precious, did you know that?
- Your TO-DO list for stuff only related to yourself comes last: you are at the end of the day, and because you were busy with everyone else's need, you have noticed that you didn't do your French language course homework, you did not sort out those old clothes in the wardrobe that you wanted to select, and you did not color your hair. Uff, maybe tomorrow? If I don't have much to do. That it is! IF. It is not an IF, with your things. You are the boss and you decide how much to take in.
- You feel strangely RESENTFUL: you don't know why, but you harbor a secret hostility towards this lack of time and towards the people or things that have prevented you from doing something you truly wanted. Example: you had a day off work, and you wanted to first tidy up the apartment, and then you wanted to go for a run and watch 2 chapters of a fun serie you cannot watch during the week. But your friend calls you (she knows it's your day off) and really needs to talk to you about her troubles over lunch. You want to help, but lunch time is the only moment you can go for the run. What to do? Do you have to be a good friend, or do you have to be selfish? RED ALARM. You just called yourself selfish just because you wanted to have some time for your favorite activity. You are being too hard on yourself! Even though you recognize this need of "me time", you give in and go to have lunch with your friend.

You are having lunch and she is grateful you are there, but you feel so resentful and angry; you would like to scream to the world "what have I done to deserve this misery?? I only wanted to run. I never get to do it". This is why people pleasers tend to have a fixed schedule to stick to. If they would have a free moment to realize how cruel they are being with themselves, it would be very overwhelming.

- ANXIETY: Lack of time gives anxiety, and a day which is too full can make us feel overwhelmed.

- VICTIMISM AND EXPECTATIONS FROM OTHERS GROW: Because you cannot control your Nos and reasonable YES, you lack the very control of your life. This is hard to admit, because you are indeed a person that understand what she/he needs, so this causes a projection externally: “the other people are using me and I am a victim of this. I wonder when this is going to end”. On the other hand, the people who get used to your VIP treatment, expect this again and again. Do you know why? There are 2 possible reasons:
 - 1) They are mean people. And you should stop seeing them.
 - 2) They simply did not get that you are bothered by doing a certain kind of favor/service, so they ASSUME that you are going to do it again. If you want something, as well as if you DON’T want something, you have to say it. This is how it works and you will feel much happier when you realize that you can express your feelings towards something. And that you never ever have to be WONDERWOMAN/MAN again! (Unless you truly like the WonderWoman movie like me and like to imitate certain aspects of her which I find truly inspiring!)

WHAT TO DO TO START WITH A REAL CHANGE, AND A SUSTAINABLE ONE:

One of our most powerful weapons is COMMUNICATION. I have come to the conclusion, after many years, that you can virtually say anything to anyone if you truly say it from a genuine place (therefore no fears of rejection or fear of hurting someone only because we are telling the truth) and if you use a bit of healthy diplomacy. Here some techniques to say a NO without feeling guilty and by proposing healthy alternatives.

Bear in mind, before reading here below, that you would need first to IDENTIFY that a certain person or thing has a power on you, and you are not able to say NO to that. Feel this trigger, identify it and then connect to the genuine part of you: am I fearing fear towards this person/thing? Am I saying yes because I want to be accepted by that boss that has my promotion in his hands? What am I truly feeling? Am I tired? Then I cannot take you to the airport, you will have to get a cab or use public transportation, my friend!

1) ANSWER TO UNREASONABLE OR UNCOMFORTABLE REQUESTS:

“I am flattered you asked me to drive you there. **However**, I had selected that day to go swimming. You know, I don’t get enough time to do that, and it is like therapy to me. **I hope you understand**».

Here you are offering a genuine reason and humbly asking the other person to use his/her understanding. Nobody would dare to say “No! you should prefer to drive me instead”.

Same thing for “I’m very much looking forward to see you in town and spend some time with you. **Unfortunately, it is not a good moment for us to have guests at home**. My mother was here for 3 weeks, we need some space. I truly hope you understand».

2) ANSWER TO ABSURD REQUESTS AT WORK – Say NO and offer alternatives:

- «XXX is much more of an expert in this. I am sure she knows»
- «I’m not the most suitable person for this. I am a copywriter and not a graphic designer. **But I can recommend** you somebody for this job».
- «I’d like to take over this project. **My best estimate** to finish it is in XXXX» (Blissful prevention technique!)
- «I cannot stay tonight at work. I am really tired. **I will be more productive** tomorrow morning, I will come a bit earlier.»

- 3) **Use your body language properly! Vocalize** clearly when you are stating your alternative and the reason of your NO. Make eye contact, shoulders and chin up. You are confident! You do not need excuses! You can tell the truth.
- 4) Seek for support and help in your NO: a therapist, a coach, a friend. You are admitting to yourself that you have difficulties with saying NO. This is already a huge step. Well done. You can do some reading on the topic, to strengthen your abilities:
- Breitman Patti and Connie Hatch. *How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty, And Say Yes to moreTime, More Joy and What Matters Most to You*
 - *The Power of NO* –James Altucher and Claudia Azula Altucher
 - Horn Sam - *How to Deflect, Disar and Defuse any Verbal Conflict*

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200805/field-guide-the-people-pleaser-may-i-serve-your-doormat>

Remember, boundaries are absolutely normal and needed and this does not make us bad people. I wish you great strength in your NO saying 😊.

THANKS FOR READING!!

Do you wanna know more? I would love to coach you in your NO challenge. Why don't you think about it and

[Contact me?](#)

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