

# Being Happy – Saying No

*This post was the second part of a series on Being Happy*

When I decided to be happier, I knew that I needed to make more time for myself. I had over scheduled myself a bit and found myself out two to three nights a week. Perhaps not a lot for some people, but I'm a bit of a homebody. Being home recharges my batteries and being out that many times a week, even for an extra hour or two, was taxing. The problem was that I didn't know when or how to say no when someone wanted some of my time.

Below are some helpful guidelines to use for deciding when to say no and how to say it.

## Deciding when to say no:

1. **Do you want to?** Really think about it. Do you want to do it? Does the request make you excited or leave you with a feeling of dread? If you're not excited about the request or dreading it then say no!
2. **Check your schedule.** Make sure that the request works with your schedule. If you're like me and like to have a few weeknights at home, then take that into consideration when making your decision.
3. **Check your priorities.** Is the request in line with your current priorities? If you have a commitment to doing mission work then volunteering at the local food bank might be right up your alley. If you have a commitment to being home every night by 9pm so you can have some down time, then being out late isn't in line with your priorities.
4. **Say No to something else.** Do you really want to say yes to the request but it doesn't fit into your schedule? Perhaps this is an opportunity to review the other activities you're doing and decide if you still want to do them or if they are still in line with your priorities. If an existing activity doesn't fit any more, then it might be time to say no to it and open up space for something else.

## How to say no:

1. **Be brief.** You don't need to explain everything that went into making your decision. Saying no can be as simple as "That doesn't work with my schedule" or "That's the right fit for me."
2. **Be honest.** Don't make something up to get out of something. You'll both feel better about it later and you don't have to keep track of fibs.
3. **Say No.** Seems straightforward right? Remember phrases like "I think that" or "right now" or "I'm not sure" make the other person think you might change your mind later. Be clear with your response and let them know you're not interested.
4. **Repeat.** Even when you're clear with someone, they might ask you again later to see if anything has changed. Be kind and let them know the answer hasn't changed.

## Neither Yes nor No (Use carefully and intentionally)

1. **Delay:** Ask for time to consider the request, rather than making an impulsive decision on the spot. This time will give you the opportunity to gain clarity. Use this time to ask yourself questions such as:
  - What is the goal of the project?
  - What would my role be?
  - How much training or preparation is involved?
  - What is the deadline or timeframe?
  - How much support will I get?
2. **Deflect:** suggest an alternative person
3. **Defer:** Acknowledge the request but defer doing it at this time. Perhaps, in the future?
4. **Set specific boundaries:** I will only be able to say yes, if.... (eg I have a committee, it's not a weekend, it's geographically desirable, etc)

## The GARD Strategy for saying NO

- **G: Gratitude** - start with gratitude and thanks to the asker for thinking of you for this task
- **A: Affirm** the person making the request. They probably put a lot of thought into asking you and it took a certain amount of courage and bravery to do so
- **R: Restate** the request the way you understand it. Make sure you clearly and fully understand the request being asked of you. It's always possible that it could be either simpler or more complex than you initially thought.
- **D: Decline** – say No

---

**Tiny Wisdom: It's OK to Say No** by Lori Deschene can be found here:

<http://tinybuddha.com/quotes/tiny-wisdom-its-ok-to-say-no/>

That is what I read at the close of the presentation.

---