Saying no

How to say no briefly and clearly, with words you can use.

Each time you say yes, you give up something else: time, rest, your own priorities. Saying no is not selfish. It protects the things you have already said yes to.

How to do it

1. **Keep it short.** "No, I cannot do that." Long explanations invite debate.
2. **Be clear.** "I will have to pass" is clearer than "I am not sure, maybe".
3. **Be kind, not sorry.** One "I am afraid not" is enough. You do not need to apologise for having limits.
4. **Buy time if you need it.** "Let me check and come back to you."
5. **Repeat if pushed.** Same words, same tone. You do not need a better reason.

Words you can use

> *"Thanks for asking. I cannot this time."*
>
> *"That does not work for me."*
>
> *"I am not able to take that on at the moment."*
>
> *"I cannot do Saturday. I could do an hour on Sunday."*
>
> *"I understand it is important to you. The answer is still no."*

What gets in the way

- [ ] Fear they will be upset or think less of me
- [ ] Guilt
- [ ] Feeling responsible for their problem
- [ ] Wanting to be seen as helpful
- [ ] Not wanting to miss out
- [ ] Believing my needs matter less

Practice, from easier to harder

A request I could say no to	How hard (0 to 10)	What I will say

The discomfort after saying no is usually brief. Resentment after saying yes can last much longer.

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