



## The Most Powerful Word – NO!

In our society the default answer to nearly every question is “Yes.” Advertising is all geared towards getting us to say “Yes - I need that.” We phrase our inquiries looking for yes: “Would you like more coffee?” “Would you be interested in joining me for dinner?” “Would you help me move next week?” “Would you mind if I asked you a personal question?” “Do you love me?” With such a powerful default answer ingrained in us it can be very difficult to say anything else - often leaving us feeling trapped, guilty, or frustrated as a result.

With such an expected and requested default answer “No” becomes one of the most powerful words we can use - if we can manage it! With all the pressure though, overcoming this momentum for “Yes” can be incredibly difficult sometimes.

While it is still very important to make sure we are clear what we want to say yes to it is equally important, if not more so, to be clear when to say no. Specifically the issue here is to be clear about what is important to us. Yes and no are equally viable and relevant answers in the appropriate circumstances - but may yield drastically different results.

Saying yes when we really mean no can lead to resentment, frustration, confusion, and dissatisfaction or even worse. So if understanding and applying the right answer is so important - how do we figure it out?

The most important step in figuring out which answer is right is to start off by understanding what is important to us. This can quite simply be done with a simple reflection process. Take a moment to slow down and sink into your body. Allow yourself to notice sensations in your body without seeking to change them. Relax and connect with your inner voice of knowledge. Now ask yourself a few simple questions about issues in your life. Notice how your body reacts. Is it energized? Does your body feel drained or depleted? One of those reactions will occur with Yes and the other with No in response to the question. Typically the response that energizes us the most is the answer that is most relevant and thus most important to us. All you need to do is notice the response and thus the answer.

So now that we have our Yes/No list of life - how do we apply it? That seems easier said than done sometimes. The reality is it all boils down to the simple issue of honesty. Are you ready, willing and able to be honest first with yourself and then with others? This can be the hardest step as well as the most liberating.

Try out the “no” answer on something small at first. Maybe something as simple as “Would you like more coffee?” or some such similar question. Notice the contentment and satisfaction you feel in giving the honest answer or even just using the word! See where we can begin to apply that answer in ways that feel comfortable and empowering. Notice how your body reacts and feels more alive. Experiment with new questions and new opportunities.

Once you get comfortable with these easier answer comes the hard part - how do you say no to something we already said yes to? While perhaps a bit more uncomfortable it is still the same technique of honesty. When speaking with honesty it is also important to speak with patience, compassion and understanding. Remember that what we are essentially doing is changing the message we have previously communicated. Do not allow guilt or shame to color the communication though. Speak clearly about your decision and the realization to change the answer.

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With openness and honesty we can all speak clearly from our hearts about what is truly yes and truly no. Over time it gets easier and we have to correct yourself less and less.

In the meantime do you know what the most powerful word in our vocabulary is?

“No”?

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