

Be Okay with Not Being Nice

How to say "no" without feeling guilty

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Do you find it difficult to say no? Do you have a fear of displeasing others? Do you have trouble expressing your true feelings? Do you use a sweet syrupy voice when asking for something? Basically -- are you too nice for your own good?

If you've said yes to some of the questions above, stop being so darn nice and start examining your personal boundaries. The stronger your boundaries, the freer you'll be to express yourself.

Take a look at your own life and think about where your boundaries are strong and where they need work. Life Coach Amber Rosenberg, who has helped hundreds of women to communicate more effectively and to enjoy greater success (www.pacificlifecoach.com) suggests you ask the following questions:

***How free do I feel to express myself?
Do I have difficulty asking for what I want or need?
Do I allow others' opinions determine my self-worth?
Do I often feel like a victim?***

"Being nice usually equates with doing everything people ask of us. We fear people will think ill of us, won't like us, or view us as lazy or uncaring," says Susan Newman, social psychologist and author of *The Book of NO: 250 Ways to Say It--and Mean It and Stop People-Pleasing Forever* (www.thebookofno.com). "A person on the yes-treadmill can be sure she will be taken advantage of."

It seems that being nice is an internal disorder amongst women, adds Medicine Woman and Clairvoyant, Charisse Landise (www.charisselandise.com) author of *Spiritual Bandages for a Ruptured Soul*. It comes from a place of insecurity. There's a strong chance that you are being really nice because you feel weak and inferior. Why don't you believe you are worth representing yourself and your needs?

Meanwhile, ulterior motives also drive people to be nice. For instance, you let a driver get in front of you and then you cuss them out because they didn't validate you with a thank you. Are you being nice to get something back in return?

In this respect, nice is phony. "When do you start being yourself," asks Landise "Sometimes it's not necessary to be nice, it's more important to be authentic. Speak your truth. Be real, not nice."

Not speaking up, fear of communicating your needs and expectations, making apologies, not negotiating, not taking credit -- all of these things make you look weak or not as skilled and talented as you really are. And you'll pay for it -- including in terms of your mental and physical well-being vs. feeling stressed and anxious and depressed.

Strong boundaries will give you the confidence to speak your truth and to choose what you want (and don't want) in your life.

Ways to Say No

If you feel uncomfortable with saying no, "book-end" the phrase they don't want to hear with a positive statement before it and after it, says Dr. Debra Condren, psychologist, career advisor, and author of *AmbITCHous: (def.) a woman who 1. makes more money 2. has more power 3. gets the credit she deserves 4. has the determination to go after her dreams and can do it with integrity.* (www.ambITCHous.com).

For instance, your co-worker asks you to replace her in an after work client schmoozing event that she has already committed to. You can say, "I can see where you'd want someone to take over that task (positive spin), but it's not a good fit for me. Good luck finding someone else."

The "good luck" punctuates the fact that your decision is final, says Condren. And it doesn't leave an opening for your co-worker to argue. Be clear, to the point and firm. You'll walk away feeling calm and relaxed and happy that you preserved your right to set limits.

We view no as a negative word, when in fact, it is one of the most liberating, says Newman. Used politely, it gains the respect of others.

Don't Hesitate

Condren recalls the CEO of a leading biotechnology and pharmaceutical company telling her this story: The CEO had hired two advance-degreed, equally qualified consultants: one man, one woman. The female scientist submitted her bill, querying, "I hope it's all right that I charged my ninety dollars per hour fee?" The CEO replied, "Of course." The male consultant -- with identical credentials -- later submitted his bill for the same services, stating, "My fee is one hundred and seventy-five dollars per hour," to which the CEO replied, "Of course."

Don't hesitate. Many of us don't like conflict but you've got to fight the tendency to sell yourself short just to avoid difficulties. Claim your credit.

Check in with Yourself

Before saying yes to anyone, Newman suggests you think critically about the request and ask yourself:

1. Do I have the time?
2. Will I feel pressured to get it done?
3. Will I be upset with myself?
4. Will I be resentful of the person asking?
5. Will I feel duped, had, or swindled?
6. What do I have to give up to do this?