

LEARN
TO SAY
“NO”



Sometimes we're low on energy because we're just doing too many things: we're spread too thinly and we simply can't cope with everything. We need to learn to say 'no' – at least some of the time. We say 'yes' for all sorts of reasons. We want to be helpful and accommodating. We don't want to hurt the other person. We think we *ought* to say 'yes' and that it will look bad if we don't. We think it's compulsory: we don't have a choice. We need the money. We're afraid that if we say 'no', we won't be asked again – ever. And so the list goes on.

One thing that can help us decide whether to accept a request or turn it down, is having a good sense of what is high priority in our life and what matters less. Stephen Covey talks about the importance of having an overall sense of mission in our life, and making judgements on the basis of what is mission-critical and what isn't. Writing a personal mission statement is a terrifically challenging – and hugely useful – exercise to do, and it can really help us make important decisions. To find out more, look at Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, in particular, habit number two: begin with the end in mind.

Here are some other things to consider:

- Give yourself time to make a decision. Sleep on it. Sometimes we say 'yes' too quickly and then it's difficult to reverse that decision. Try to say something like:

That sounds very interesting. I'll need to double-check my other commitments. Can I get back to you tomorrow?

- Always trust your gut instinct, even if reason might be telling you something different.

And if you do decide to say 'no':

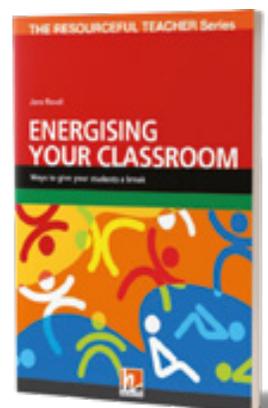
- Say no to the request and not the person. For example:

I'd really like to help you out, but no, I'm afraid I can't do that this time.

- Be nice but be firm in your body language, words and tone of voice.
- Make sure your 'no' is very clear! Use the word 'no' or the negative 'not' in your words. (See the example above.)
- Practise in advance if you need to, on your own or roleplaying it with a friend.
- Think: So what is saying 'no' enabling me to say 'yes' to?

Objection: *Sometimes it's just not possible to say no.*

Counter: *You might not like the choice you have, but you always have a choice.*



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