



Cut Your Stress in Half!

Why Saying No is the Answer and How to Do It

By [Emma-Louise Elsey](#)

Saying "No" is the real secret to reducing your stress and overwhelm. With so much going on in our lives and so many opportunities, it's easy to get caught up in a non-stop whirlwind of activity. But often all we need to reduce our stress is time for ourselves -- whether we do what we truly enjoy or simply rest and recover!

Life is speeding up around us by the day. There are many ways to stay sane while all about us are losing their heads -- but the easiest is a two letter word -- No!

I love the way some Italians say "No". It's intense and passionate, a lengthy high-pitched 'nnnnnnnnnn' sound followed by a deeper short 'o' - like the 'o' in not. A no holds-barred, slightly comedic and entirely unapologetic "Nnnnnnnn-o". We could all learn from the Italians!

We need to know ourselves well enough to say "Yes" to what's important to us and to confidently say "No" to what isn't. It's that simple - but simple is not always easy. So, how can we tell in this busy life of ours what's really important to us? Well, here are some tips.

Say "Yes" if:

1. You're TRULY excited about the event/activity
2. If it moves you towards your goals
3. If it aligns with your values

Say "No" if:

1. You're exhausted
2. You're dreading it
3. You're unsure how you feel (try "My schedule is full -- can I say no for now and let you know?")

There will inevitably be conflicts. You're tired but there are events and activities you need to attend in order to meet career goals or maintain relationships with friends and family. And if you have children who depend on you for transport -- you will need to factor in their needs too.

The key thing is to take a step back and make sure your program is BALANCED. Make sure that along with the 'duty' visits, activities with your kids, partner and for your career that you have some actions just for you -- whether for fun or simply some rest and recovery! These don't need to be big activities or chunks of time, but they do need to be activities that are meaningful for you.

So, take a regular preview of your entire weekly schedule. If you notice you have several things back-to-back or are out 2-3 nights in a row, book in some rest and recovery or me 'time' in ADVANCE! You may need to set your boundaries and let the important people around you know what you're doing - and what you need from them. Maybe your partner needs to look after the kids while you have a relaxing bath, or tell your boss you need to leave work on time -- so you can go to the gym or you ask your mom not to call late as you will be having an early night on Wednesday.

Whatever you end up doing -- make sure you do it in a state of acceptance. Rather than beating yourself up about a choice you've made, try saying to yourself, "I'd rather be at home/don't like Fred and Mary, but I've decided I'm going and I'm choosing to be OK with that." Don't add angst and wishful thinking to your already busy life.

And if you're feeling overwhelmed but are still not sure about whether to attend an event ask yourself, "Will I look back in 5 year's time and think this was the right thing to do?"

Saying "No" is generally the safer bet; it's much easier to change a "No" into a "Yes" than a "Yes" into a "No".

Finally, REMEMBER, even if you have said "Yes", you're ALWAYS allowed to change your mind! But it takes true courage to disappoint others -- instead of compromising our values and disappointing ourselves...

"There are only two words that will always lead you to success. Those words are yes and no. Undoubtedly, you've mastered saying yes. So start practicing saying no. Your goals depend on it!" Jack Canfield

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