



# Just say no

Manage your stress levels by saying no to your customers, your partners and even yourself...

The year has only just started and already you're heading for burnout. The memory and the effect of the holidays are long gone. The emails are streaming through in their hundreds and meetings are stacked up back to back.

Your clients want more attention; your suppliers experience more problems; bureaucratic red tape eats into your time and energy. Your open door policy guarantees interruptions all day long. There are people on your team who don't perform unless you supervise them constantly; and others, new to their jobs, who need ongoing guidance and encouragement. Sound familiar? It's no wonder your stress levels are rising.

Some of the stressors in your business life are beyond your control. The submission of your financial and legislative returns can't be ignored, for example, and neither can some of clients' demands. Traffic also comes to mind... Generally situations that

are beyond your control, heighten our stress levels. In these situations, try to control your emotions so that resentment, frustration, and anger don't take over. These emotions will only increase your stress levels, and that of everyone in your vicinity.

## NEGOTIATE THOSE STRESSORS

Given the world we live in, some stressors are unavoidable and not everything is negotiable. Sometimes however, there is more room to negotiate than you realise. When you are able to say no skilfully and appropriately, you can take advantage of it.

How often do you find yourself in situations that you have created, by saying yes instead of no?

- To a client: "Yes of course. It'll be ready by Friday."
- To a supplier: "It's not a problem. I can get it done."
- To a colleague: "Don't worry. I'm happy to help out."

The ability to say no is one of the most powerful tools at your disposal when it comes to managing your time and energy and keeping yourself in a good space. It relieves some of the resentment and anger you feel when you find yourself in a corner where you are unable to live up to the standards or promises to which you have committed.

## HOW TO SAY NO TO A CLIENT

For many people, saying no to a client is virtually unthinkable. But agreeing to standards or deadlines without properly considering their implications, takes you into dangerous territory. It's a procession of bland assurances, through to excuses and apologies, to more excuses and even lies. The client becomes impatient, demanding and then abusive. You feel pressurised, defensive and resentful. Your client writes you off as unreliable.

If you agree to requests without properly considering their implications, you trade the positive impression you give with your willingness to please, for the negative impression you create when you cannot live up to your commitments. Use the four steps below to say no with care and consideration, the respect that others have for you will grow. Even better, your stress levels will fall.

Ask questions to find out exactly what the person wants and what you are getting yourself into. Take time to be clear on the details. Don't be pushed into a making a hasty decision.

Acknowledge the request so the person knows you have heard and understood. If you then decide to say no, they have the reassurance that you have not done so thoughtlessly or carelessly. You might say: "So let me be clear. You want me to..." Or, "Okay, you're asking if I can..."

The third step is an important one. Consider your own resources, capabilities and priorities before you come to a decision. When you don't, you are the one who is left dealing with the cost, time and resource implications that have been overlooked.

Now consider the impact - both short- and long-term - of your decision. You might decide to stretch the boundaries or offer a compromise in one situation, but not in another. Do so with forethought.

If you decide to say no, explain how and why you have made your decision. This way the other person can understand your reasoning and the basis for the decision. They might wish you had said yes, but they must respect a decision that is considered and realistic.

Try saying no using these steps and see the positive effect it has on your stress levels... **YB**

---

Maureen Collins's experience is in management and leadership training; team building, and handling change and transition. She is also the author of *Straight Talk: Conversations at Work That Get Results*. For more visit: [www.straight-talk.co.za](http://www.straight-talk.co.za).



**Soft Serve Ice Cream**

Proud supplier of your Ice-Cream equipment

**TAYLOR**

**GOLDLINE INDUSTRIES**

Linbro Office Park, 22 Village Crescent, Linbro Park  
**Tel: 011 608-1532**  
Fax: 011 608-0963 [www.goldline.co.za](http://www.goldline.co.za)  
[info@goldline.co.za](mailto:info@goldline.co.za)