

REFUSING REQUESTS

It's okay to say "no."

- We all have the right to say "no" to anything and anyone.
- We learn to feel very uncomfortable saying "no" in childhood. Most of us were taught that we don't have the right to say "no" and it's hard to overcome that early teaching.
- Saying "no" doesn't mean that you reject the other person. It simply means that you reject their request.
- Saying "no" isn't selfish if your motive is simply to look out for your own needs and you're not acting out of anger, spite, to get even or to punish the other person.
- When you back down to pressure and say "yes" against your better judgement, you compromise your self-respect and reward the other person for pressuring you, thus encouraging them to do it again.

Guidelines for Refusing Requests

1. **Be direct.** Don't lie or give excuses. And choose your words carefully to avoid ambiguity - for example, say "I will not..." instead of "I'd rather not...", which may be perceived as an invitation for pressure.
2. **Have a repertoire of assertive responses ready.** Here are some examples:
 - "Not at this time."
 - "I've decided not to..."
 - "I'm drawing the line at..."
 - "I can't do that for you."
 - "No, I don't want to..."
 - "No, I am worried/concerned/afraid that..."
 - "I can see that you are disappointed, but I need..."
 - "My priority right now is..."
 - "That doesn't work for me."
 - "I'm not comfortable with ..."
 - "I am committed to..."
 - "I am not taking on new projects at the moment."
 - "I have learned from previous experience that this doesn't suit me."
3. **Restructure the situation.** For example, you can point out who else may be able to help the person.
4. **Set limits.** Specify any conditions that must be met in order for you to fulfill the person's request. For example, you'd be willing to help them tomorrow instead of today or to loan them \$10 instead of \$50.