

Healthy Boundaries

-Week 5-



1 WHEN OTHERS SAY “NO”

This week I want you to focus on what happens when others say “no.”

1.1 THINK ABOUT A SPECIFIC SITUATION WHEN SOMEONE TOLD YOU “NO.”

What, exactly, did that person say?

What was your initial thought when you heard this?

Looking back now, what are all the reasons they might have said “no” that have *nothing to do with you*?

What boundaries did that person put into place?

What can you learn from that person and that situation?

Remove yourself from the situation. As a neutral party, what would you think of what happened?

2 WHEN YOU STRUGGLE TO SAY “NO”

When others say “no,” it’s often because they are practicing self-care and maintaining personal boundaries. Once you recognize that it’s more about these reasons — and less about how they feel about you — it will be easier for you to follow suit and start saying “no.”

2.1 THINK ABOUT A SPECIFIC SITUATION WHEN YOU STRUGGLED TO SAY “NO.”

Pay close attention to *why* you feel uncomfortable about saying “no.” Ask yourself these questions:

- What am I afraid they will think?
- How am I worried they will feel?
- What am I afraid the future outcome will be if I say “no”?

Example:

My boss offered me a promotion with a pay increase. The job would be very time-consuming and would take even more time away from my family. The money is tempting, but I know I can’t get back the time with my daughter. She is growing up so fast.

I’m uncomfortable saying “no” to my boss because:

I’m afraid he will think I don’t value the company and I’m not serious about my work.

I don’t want him to feel like I’m rejecting him after all the good he has done for me over the years.

I’m afraid that in the future he won’t offer me promotions if I say “no” to this one. I’m afraid he will pass me over for promotion.

Now it’s your turn. Who did you struggle to say “no” to? _____

I was afraid they would think...

I didn’t want them to feel...

I was afraid that in the future...

2.2 TURN YOUR THOUGHTS AROUND.

Remember that others' thoughts, feelings and beliefs are *theirs and theirs alone*. What they think, feel and believe is not information you have a right to know. You are only responsible for *your own* thoughts, feelings and beliefs. Focus on turning your thoughts around.

Example:

I can't know what someone else really thinks of me. That is his business — not mine. I do know my boss sees how hard I work and that I do value the company. He constantly compliments me on my work ethic, and he has written positive things on my work reviews in the past. So, my fear of what he will think isn't grounded in reality.

I can't control how another person feels at any time. I can't even truly know how they feel because that is a personal boundary. What I can do is tell him how I feel: I want what is best for the company, just like he does; however, right now I need to have balance between work and home. My decision to say "no" has nothing to do with him personally, but rather it's about keeping myself balanced so I will be the best employee I can be.

I can't control someone else's actions or how they will treat me in the future. I do know that if I take this position and resent it later, it will impact my work review and future promotions. I'm better off giving an honest "no" now than giving a dishonest "yes" today and dealing with any issues as they come later. If I agree to something I don't want, I will be miserable for sure. The future has yet to be determined, so I can't make this decision based on what I think his actions might be in a few months or years.

Now it's your turn. How can you turn your thoughts around in the situation you just described?

I can't know what someone really thinks of me...

I can't control how someone feels...

I can't control how someone will act or treat me in the future...

3 HOW TO SAY “NO”

Most of us struggle with saying “no” because we’re not sure of the best way to deliver the message. When saying “no,” it’s best to keep your message positive, short and direct.

Example:

Sue asked me to help her with the PTA fundraiser. She would like for the two of us to work together on getting sponsors for a school event and earning money to put toward the school dance. I would need to meet with her on Wednesday nights for meetings, and I would have additional responsibilities beyond those meetings, such as making phone calls to local businesses.

1. **Start with gratitude.** When someone asks you for something, remember to say “thank you.” They could have asked someone else, but they value you, your ability, your reputation or your resources. It’s a compliment!

Thank you so much, Sue, for thinking of me for this opportunity to help the school and the PTA.

2. **Give a date or time frame for delivering your response.** Give yourself time to consider the request and assess your resources (time, money, personal needs, etc.).

I will check my calendar and get back to you on Monday.

3. **Respond to the request, and thank the person again.** Contact the person in whatever way works best for you and let them know what you decided. Thank them again, and let them know how much you value them. Remind them to think of you again in the future.

Sue, thank you again for thinking of me for this event. I really love how you have helped the PTA grow and change and contribute to the school this year. We are blessed to have you on the team! I looked over my calendar for the next few months, and I currently have obligations that will not allow me to help in the way you asked. However, if something comes up in the future, maybe a little closer to the dance, please let me know, and I’ll see if I can help then.

3.1 PRACTICE YOUR RESPONSE.

Use the guidelines above to write your own script, and practice using it this week.

4 THE ART OF NEGOTIATING

Sometimes your boundaries will require you to give a firm “no.” However, sometimes there is room for negotiation. When someone makes a request for your time, money or resources, you might consider it a preliminary request. They offered the best terms and conditions for *them*. You may be able to negotiate terms that work better for *you*.

Example:

Initial request: Mom, could you babysit every Thursday night so I can go grocery shopping without the kids?

My counteroffer: Joan, I would love to watch the kiddos once a week to help you out. I won't lock in to Thursday night because I have other obligations on that night. However, most Tuesday nights are open. I will agree to that on a weekly basis for now.

4.1 COME UP WITH A COUNTEROFFER.

Only offer what you are comfortable with doing. If your counteroffer is declined, follow the guidelines from section 3 on the previous page to politely decline the request.

Initial request...

My counteroffer...

5 HOW SAYING “NO” IS ACTUALLY SAYING “YES”

We often think that saying “no” is a rejection of something — that we’re missing out on an opportunity, situation or event. What we may fail to see is the positive of the situation. By saying “no” to a request, we’re actually saying “yes” to something else.

By saying “no” to...	I’m saying “yes” to...
<i>babysitting every Thursday</i>	<i>my favorite yoga class, which allows me to relax</i>
<i>helping with the PTA fundraiser on Wednesday nights</i>	<i>dinner with my family and helping my kiddos with homework</i>
<i>a job promotion, with additional pay and responsibilities</i>	<i>golf lessons and quality time with my daughter</i>

5.1 FOCUS ON WHAT YOU’RE SAYING “YES” TO.

Think about recent requests that you’ve struggled to say “no” to. Instead of dwelling on the negative, focus on the positive. Write down what you’re actually saying “yes” to in each situation.

By saying “no” to...	I’m saying “yes” to...