



Unit: Stress Management

Skill 13: Managing your Emotions

Activity B: OK to Say No

Activity Skills:

Small group discussion and personal reflection.

Leadership Skills:

Understanding strategies for how to tactfully say no and not feel guilty.

Suggested Level:

Beginning

Time:

20-30 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Flipchart and markers
- Paper
- Pens or pencils to write

Do Ahead:

- Make copies of worksheet

Source:

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BACKGROUND:

Do you find yourself saying yes to too many things? Over-scheduling and trying to do too much are sure-fire ways to increase your stress and frustration levels. In the Time Management unit, Skills 8 and 9 reviewed issues of planning and setting priorities, and these strategies can help you be more productive. However no one can do it all.

To start understanding how to say no, first we must consider why we say yes. What reasons do people have to saying yes to requests, whether for additional responsibilities or tasks? (Brainstorm a bit with participants and write the reasons on large flipchart so all can view.)

Examples might include:

- Being flattered.
- Enjoy feeling of being needed.
- Not wanting to hurt the requester's feelings.
- Feeling guilty if answer no.
- Thinking there is no one else to do if you say no.
- Having a need to prove yourself – to others or yourself.
- Wanting more challenge.
- Wanting more responsibility.
- Not understanding how much time and effort the request will take.
- Don't know how to say no.

How do you say no firmly, yet nicely? Do you have a lot of practice? Introduce the worksheet and have participants refer to these ideas when doing the activity.

WHAT TO DO:

This activity is done with partners. The participant pairs will create and practice scenarios where they have to say no. One person will play the requester, and the other will have to say no. The requester should then try at least 2 more times to persuade the responder to say yes, and the responder must find a diplomatic way to still stick with their no answer. (The facilitator may want to use a volunteer and provide a quick example of how this would work.) Give the participants time so each person can be the requester and responder.

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- Did the requesters persuade the responders to say yes?

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Notes:

- When it was your turn to say no, could you stick to it even when you were pressed?
- How did it feel to say no?
- For the requesters, how did it feel to pressure the other person?
- Is it hard to ask for help with something? Is it worse when people say no?
- What were some of the gentle ways to say no? (List these on another flipchart page and then cross reference with the worksheet.)

Apply:

- What do you need to know about yourself to feel okay saying no?
- Will saying no become easier with practice?
- Are there times to say yes? How do you know?

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

Ask students to write a brief paragraph on a situation where they said yes to doing something, but then regretted not saying no. How could they have said no and still maintained a positive relationship with the requester?

Resources And Web Links: