

Build Your Self-Esteem by Saying “Yes” to You!

By Julie Fuimano, Personal Development Expert & Coach



Have you ever had anyone speak to you in a tone that made you feel uncomfortable? And yet, you said nothing. Have you ever done something for someone or with someone that you really didn't want to do? And yet, you did it anyway, only to become resentful later.

Every time you say nothing, every time you let it slide, every time you do something for someone else that you don't want to do, you tell yourself that the other person means more than you. In essence, you give yourself (and others) the message that you don't matter.

How It Begins

One of the first words we learn to say as infants is “no”. We learn this word partly because we hear it so frequently and it's an easy word to pronounce. It becomes a popular word as we move into the toddler years. Then we learn that it's not nice to say “no”, that we need to do as we are told. As children, this is how we learn right from wrong; it's how we are socialized and learn acceptable behavior.

As we grow, we allow people to convince us to do things that are not congruent with the way we want to be. Somewhere along the way to adulthood, our ability to say “no” gets lost. It becomes easier to tell ourselves “no” than to say “no” to others, so we ignore our own feelings and go with the flow. What matters is that we please others. So, we take on projects and additional responsibilities that we'd rather not do and after awhile we become proudly known for ‘getting it done’. Over time, we become resentful and unhappy. We continue to repeat the same messages we were taught as children and never question whether they serve us as adults.

Paying the Price

Saying “yes” when you'd rather not means you're really saying “no” to yourself. This undermines your self-esteem. You unwittingly tell yourself that the other person's needs come before your own and you devalue yourself in the process. And, until you are ready to take responsibility for yourself, it will continue.

You may be accustomed to placing the needs of others before yourself. And yet, can't you be just as caring when you care for yourself first?

When I met Susan, it was just before Christmas. She told me that 45 people were coming over for Christmas dinner. She was excited to say that her mother was coming but her demeanor changed when she said her siblings were coming with their spouses, children, and grandchildren. She was clearly not looking forward to this dinner; it was a lot of work and she was expected to cook every year – family members did not take turns, although some of her sisters brought food. I asked her to tell me what the perfect Christmas dinner would be like. She said it would just be the seven of them – her husband, her children, and her mother. So I asked her what would happen if she announced that she was no longer going to have Christmas dinner for everyone. Interestingly, she had not considered this as a possibility. She just figured she'd be stuck having this dinner every year, ad infinitum. She didn't realize that she could choose to do something different; she just needed to give herself permission.

Just as she believes that it is her duty to have this dinner, it is possible that her relatives attend out of a sense of duty. She might find that once her true feelings are exposed that others share the same feelings of obligation. Either way, she is entitled to spend Christmas dinner in a way that brings her the most joy. Until she is honest with herself and others, she will continue to suffer needlessly.

What things in your life do you continue to do over and over because that's how it's always been? Not only is it all right, it is imperative that you question the things you do and consciously choose how to spend your time and energy. It's your life. You can live by design or by default. Either way, you only live once.



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Follow Your Heart

How do you learn to say “no”? By practicing. Pause before you answer any request made of you, whether it’s for your time, energy or money, etc. Then search your heart for what you really want. How do you feel to say “yes” to this request? How do you feel to say “no”? Which feels better? Even if you’re not sure why, go with your gut. Learning to listen to your inner self is critical. Every time you say “no”, you say “yes” to you. This builds self-esteem, and as you honor yourself, you reclaim your personal power.

Saying “no” to things you don’t want means you’re able to say “yes” to things you do want. Eliminating things that you don’t want in your life – things that don’t make you feel good – gives you the time, energy, and space to add things that you do enjoy. When you say “yes” to your own needs and wants, you validate yourself; this builds confidence and inner strength. When you feel good, you’re happier, more productive, and you have more fun!

You can say “no” with grace and love. As you say “no” to others, don’t make them wrong; simply state your Truth. And don’t apologize! (You’re doing nothing wrong!) Simply state that you are unable to take on any more projects and that you have stopped doing things that are not your responsibility or not in your best interest. If you can, refer them to someone who can help them or show them how to do it for themselves.

Do Unto Yourself As You Would Do Unto Others

The highest level of respect you can give is the respect you show yourself. People often say that you must give respect in order to get it; in order to get it, you must give it to yourself. As you treat yourself with compassion and love, you teach others how you expect to be treated, and by raising your standards, you permit others to do the same.

Julie Fuimano, MBA, BSN, RN, CSAC is named one of the TOP 100 THOUGHT LEADERS in personal leadership development. Your happiness and success is her business! Her coaching clients experience dramatic and profound results in their productivity, level of confidence, and their relationships. As a certified coach, accomplished writer, and motivational speaker, Julie empowers your personal best and teaches you simple, practical tools for meeting your goals, communicating effectively with others, and enjoying yourself at work and at home. Visit www.NurturingYourSuccess.com to learn more about coaching with Julie or contact Julie@NurturingYourSuccess.com to have her speak at your next meeting or conference. Subscribe to her blog at www.NurturingYourSuccessBlog.com.



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