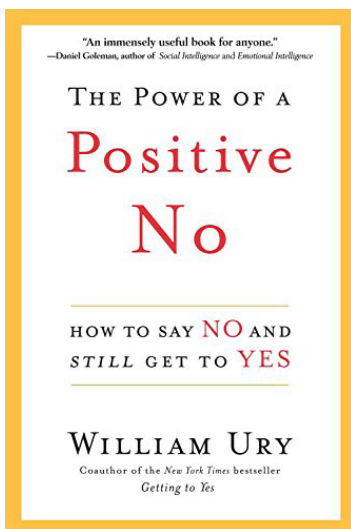


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William Ury, a prolific author and negotiation expert, empowers individuals to navigate life's challenges, from familial disputes to corporate conflicts, offering practical insights for saying No and still getting to Yes.

The Power of a Positive No

THE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, saying "No" is both challenging and essential. This simple word has the power to transform our lives positively if used correctly. We often find ourselves in situations where we must say "No" to maintain our boundaries and protect our well-being.

Saying "No" is not about being negative; it's about setting boundaries and protecting our interests. It allows us to create space for the things that truly matter, preserve what we value, and change what no longer works.

The Three Great Gifts of a Positive No:

- 1. Create What You Want:** Saying "No" creates space for what truly matters, enabling you to prioritize your interests.
- 2. Protect What You Value:** It sets boundaries that safeguard your values, whether in personal life, work, or society.
- 3. Change What No Longer Works:** A Positive No empowers you to challenge the status quo, initiating positive changes.

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Saying “No” can be challenging, but with practice and patience, you can master the art of the Positive No and enjoy the freedom to be your true self while protecting what you value in life.

STAGE ONE: PREPARE

Chapter 1: Uncover Your Yes

One big mistake in saying “No” is starting from “No” itself. Instead, start from “Yes” – anchor your “No” in what truly matters to you.

Your “No” gains strength from your “Yes.” Reacting emotionally is a challenge; proactivity is the key. A crucial part of this process is “stopping” before responding. Imagine a mental balcony, a place of detachment and clarity. Going there helps us gain perspective, making it easier to find the “Yes” behind our “No.”

In our fast-paced world, time for contemplation is scarce but invaluable. It’s essential to find moments for reflection. Utilizing rote phrases can assist when you need a time-out. If someone presents an unwanted demand, phrases like “Let’s discuss this later” or “I’ll get back to you tomorrow” provide a buffer.

To uncover your motivations for saying “No,” keep asking yourself “Why?” This powerful technique helps reveal your interests, which are the driving forces behind your decisions.

So, constantly ask yourself:

- **What do I aim to achieve by saying “No”?** What positive aspects or activities am I endorsing?
- **What am I safeguarding by saying “No”?** Which fundamental interests of mine are in jeopardy if I agree or accept the current situation?
- **What am I striving to alter through my “No”?** What issues exist with the current circumstances, and how would they improve with change?

To say “No” effectively, digging deeper into your underlying motivations is crucial. Beyond your surface desires and aspirations lie your core needs—the fundamental drives guiding human behavior. Five common human needs include safety, sustenance, belonging, respect, and autonomy.

When you want to decline a request, try to uncover these fundamental needs. For instance, if you want to reject working another weekend due to long-standing plans with your spouse, your interests initially revolve around keeping your commitment and avoiding overwork. However, digging deeper reveals the need for a strong marriage, rooted in the need for love and belonging, and a desire for autonomy over your schedule.

Listening to your emotions is essential in this process, as emotions signal unmet needs. Fear highlights potential threats; anger signifies issues requiring correction; guilt emphasizes relationship sensitivity and gut feelings suggest the need for reconsideration.

Values also play a significant role in motivating effective “No” responses. Values encompass principles like honesty, integrity, fairness, and kindness. Aligning your decision with your values can inspire the courage to take a stand.

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Sometimes, we struggle with the idea of saying “No” because we believe it’s impossible or fear the consequences. This happens when we mix up whether to say “No” with how to say it. To overcome this, it’s essential to separate the “whether” from the “how.” Start by clarifying your true intention regarding the situation. Once you’ve determined whether you want to say “No,” you can figure out how to do it effectively.

Your emotions can be harnessed to provide the energy needed to support your decision. Instead of letting emotions overwhelm you, channel them into determination. Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated how, when controlled, anger could be transformed into a powerful force for change.

Uncovering your “Yes” accomplishes three important tasks: it provides a positive foundation, gives you a clear direction, and supplies you with the necessary energy to assert your “No” effectively.

Chapter 2: Empower Your No

Saying “No” can be challenging, especially when faced with strong reactions from others. Confidence and following through on your “No” are essential for an effective No. Unlike negative power that punishes, positive power focuses on protecting and advancing your interests. An example of positive power is Rosa Parks, whose refusal to give up her bus seat initiated the civil rights movement.

Developing a Plan B helps to address your interests if the other person rejects your “No.” Empowering your “No” involves expressing your needs without appearing needy. It allows you to stand up for yourself while taking responsibility for meeting your interests, with or without the other’s cooperation. A practical Plan B can level the playing field when the other has more power.

Plan B is your backup plan, not a fallback or compromise. It’s what you’ll do if the other party doesn’t accept your “No.” Plan B isn’t about punishing others but ensuring your interests are met even if the other party doesn’t cooperate. It’s a source of positive power.

To strengthen your Plan B, brainstorm various alternatives, even wild ideas, without immediate judgment. Building a winning coalition can be part of your Plan B, where allies share your interests and help level the playing field. Rosa Parks and her supporters used this approach to challenge segregated busing successfully.

Anticipating the other party’s power moves is crucial when developing your Plan B. Think about how they might try to make you back down and plan your responses to empower your “No.”

When faced with a potentially hostile reaction from someone when we say “No,” it’s tempting to retaliate. However, a more effective strategy is to neutralize their behavior by taking away their means to harm or threaten us. For instance, if a difficult customer demands a lower price and might escalate the issue to your boss, you can pre-emptively inform your boss and request that they refer the customer back to you. By doing this, you remove the customer’s leverage.

Considering the worst-case scenario can also be helpful. It allows you to differentiate between fear and reality, helping you maintain composure during tense moments.

After developing a strong Plan B, it is essential to reassess whether to say “No.” Three key questions guide this decision: Do you have the interest, power, and right to say “No”? If these align, you are well-equipped to stand your ground and respect your interests and the other party.

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Chapter 3: Respect Your Way To Yes

Now that you've learned to say no, the next challenge is to help others say yes to your no. So, how can you make it easier for them to accept your refusal and respect your needs? Many Nos unintentionally reject the other person, leading them to feel hurt or humiliated. Disrespect can damage relationships and escalate conflicts.

To prepare others to say yes, you shouldn't reject them but respect them. Respect diminishes the sting of rejection. Respect doesn't mean being overly accommodating; it involves giving positive attention, listening, and acknowledging others as fellow human beings. Treat others with the same dignity you would like to receive.

Before we can genuinely offer respect to others, we must first cultivate self-respect. Self-respect creates space for understanding others. It involves paying attention, listening, acknowledging, and recognizing the humanity in others, regardless of personal feelings. Respect doesn't mean you have to like someone; it's about recognizing their value as a human being.

Even when you don't feel like respecting someone, doing so can help the other person be more receptive to your message and lead to more favorable outcomes.

One fundamental aspect of respect is attentive listening, which involves paying positive attention to others, understanding their underlying needs, and reciprocating the respect they deserve. Even in challenging situations, listening can be a powerful tool in building rapport and resolving conflicts.

Demonstrating respect also involves asking clarifying questions, acknowledging the other person's point of view, and expressing value for the relationship. Clarifying questions help address others' demands or inappropriate behavior constructively. Acknowledgement doesn't mean agreeing with others but recognizing the person's existence, interests, and influence.

Acknowledgment has the power to surprise and transform interactions. Beginning with a positive note, such as appreciation or a polite request for attention, can help make your No more acceptable.

STAGE TWO: DELIVER

Chapter 4: Express Your Yes

Delivering a Positive No involves a structured process that starts by affirming with a Yes, establishing limits with a No, and proposing alternative solutions with another Yes.

The first Yes serves two purposes: it affirms your intention and explains why you're saying No. Affirming your Yes strengthens your No, while explaining your No clarifies your motives and avoids personal rejection. You can describe problematic behavior with fact-based statements (I-statements) so the other person can easily understand and accept your No. It's important to be clear and neutral and focus on the problem, not the person, to communicate effectively.

A real-life scenario involved Katherine and her colleague Tom, who co-managed a volunteer organization. Tom often made decisions without consulting Katherine, which led to conflict. In their initial confrontation, Katherine accused Tom of being disrespectful, resulting in a defensive reaction. In a second attempt, Katherine approached the issue

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by acknowledging Tom's work and sticking to the facts, such as the unauthorized announcements and changes. This approach helped Tom understand the problematic behavior, emphasizing the importance of describing the others' behavior plainly and neutrally.

Learning to describe someone's behavior without passing judgment is a challenging yet vital task. We may unknowingly attack others through words, tone, or body language, even if we don't resort to physical actions like pushing or hitting. One common form of blame is using words like "should" or "shouldn't," which carry implicit judgment. A more neutral approach is to describe the problem's impact instead of resorting to "should."

Categorical statements like "You never satisfy me" or "You always put me down" can be counterproductive. They generalize the issue and put the other person in an inescapable box. Instead, describe specific facts and how they made you feel without judgment, which can lead to more constructive conversations. Take responsibility for your feelings and describe them calmly rather than venting impulsively.

At times, you might hesitate to express your No due to concerns about the other person's response. However, remember that you're responsible for clearly stating your feelings and interests, leaving the other person to decide how to respond.

Using we-statements can help when you worry about appearing selfish. You can appeal to shared interests, such as the well-being of a community, family, or organization. For example, instead of declining a customer's request for a customized product, you can frame it as maintaining low prices for all customers.

Sometimes, your No might stem from a gut feeling, and there's no need for elaborate explanations or excuses. Trust your intuition and state your discomfort directly.

Expressing your Yes is essentially a value statement. It's about asserting what truly matters to you, whether as a person, a professional, or an individual with ethical and moral values. Once you've established your Yes, you can move on to expressing your No in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Assert Your No

In exploring the Positive No method, we've reached its core: asserting your No. This step involves establishing clear boundaries and limits. Saying No is fundamental to survival and protection. It's the key to order, structure, and discipline, often seen in rules and laws.

No is not just about rejection; it's also a tool for defining identity for individuals and organizations. It's a selection principle that distinguishes and shapes who you are. Striking the right balance between assertiveness and aggression in saying No is challenging.

The solution lies in a natural No that flows effortlessly from your core values. Children often exhibit this natural No, transparent and untainted by fear or anger. Your No should be clear, committed, and clean, flowing from the Yes you've uncovered and the power you've developed.

Your positive No is a boundary, not an impenetrable wall, allowing parties to see each other while maintaining limits. When a firm boundary is drawn, the other party can feel more satisfied, knowing the limits.

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Maintaining a matter-of-fact tone is vital; there's no need for aggression or placation. Politeness and firmness can coexist, ensuring your No flows naturally from your power.

When saying No, it's important to keep emotions like anger or guilt out of the message. Instead, aim for a clear, honest, and respectful response. There are various ways to say No respectfully. You can simply use the word "No" or add "No, thanks" to maintain politeness. Framing your response as a policy you adhere to can depersonalize the No and affirm your principles.

Another approach is to mention prior commitments, such as having plans or other responsibilities. This softens the No and keeps the door open for future agreements.

Using "Not now" can be useful when you want to acknowledge the request but cannot commit at the moment. It leaves room for reconsideration. However, if you're certain about your decision, it's best to communicate that clearly.

Declining a request when you believe you cannot do a good job is a wise choice. It's an affirmation of your interests and quality standards. Remember that saying No respectfully and honestly can lead to better relationships and outcomes in the long run.

Here are several useful phrases to reject inappropriate behavior effectively:

1. **"Stop/No!":** When you must set a clear boundary, use direct words like "stop" and "no." For instance, in cases of harassment, saying "stop" is important for clarity and preventing further unwanted advances.
2. **"Hold On/Whoa/Wait a Minute!":** These phrases can be less abrupt than "stop" or "no" while effectively interrupting behavior. They allow you to slow down a situation, encouraging the other person to reconsider their actions.
3. **"That Is Not OK/That Is Not Appropriate/That Is Not Allowed":** These phrases convey that the behavior is unacceptable without making it a personal attack. They help maintain boundaries and standards.
4. **"It's Not OK for Me/This Doesn't Work for Me":** By using an "I-statement," you depersonalize the rejection, emphasizing that the behavior doesn't align with your needs or preferences.
5. **"That's Enough":** Expressing that you've had enough signals a clear limit without passing judgment on past behavior.

It is possible to reject behavior without explicitly using the word "no." For example, instead of saying, "No playing until homework is done," you can say, "You can play once your homework is finished."

Ultimately, the goal is to protect your boundaries and values without causing unnecessary harm or conflict. A Positive No serves as a shield of protection rather than a sword of rejection, safeguarding your interests while preserving relationships.

Chapter 6: Propose A Yes

After saying "No," it's essential not to stop there but to follow up with a "Yes" in the form of a positive proposal. Many people make the mistake of simply saying No without offering an alternative. A Positive No involves persuasion,

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not just communication, and it aims to have the other party accept your No, change their behavior, and potentially maintain the relationship.

The positive proposal can take different forms. If you're saying No to a demand, you can suggest another option that addresses their needs while meeting your interests. If timing is the issue, consider agreeing but with a changed timeline. And if you genuinely want to say Yes but can't be due to certain conditions, you can make a conditional offer, specifying the circumstances under which you'd agree.

When saying "No" to someone's behavior, try to request a constructive change. Often, people fail to communicate their needs clearly, leading to misunderstandings. The key is to provide a clear, feasible, positively framed, and respectful request.

- 1. Make Your Request Clear:** Instead of vague requests like "be more considerate," specify the behavior change you want, such as "please wash the dishes you use." This clarity ensures both parties understand what's expected.
- 2. Make Your Request Feasible:** Ensure that your request is something the other person can realistically achieve. For instance, instead of saying, "stop feeling angry," ask them to take a first step like "sit down and talk about why you're feeling angry."
- 3. Frame Your Request Positively:** Frame your request in a positive manner to focus the other person's attention on the desired action. Instead of saying, "don't shout at me," say, "please talk to me in a quiet tone."
- 4. Make Your Request Respectful:** Maintain a respectful tone when making your request. Avoid issuing demands or orders and instead use polite language.
- 5. Propose an Outcome of Mutual Respect:** Sometimes, a straightforward "No" is the only option. In such cases, propose an outcome of mutual respect, asking the other person to accept your decision and respect your needs. This approach fosters understanding and goodwill.

A Positive No is effective when it ends on a positive note. This can be achieved by making a positive proposal or showing respect.

STAGE THREE: FOLLOW THROUGH

Chapter 7: Stay True To Your Yes

After delivering a Positive No, the work is not done; you still need to manage the other person's reaction. Receiving a No can be challenging for them, as it may disrupt their expectations, threaten their values, or challenge their identity.

Understanding that people go through emotional stages when receiving bad news, such as avoidance, denial, anxiety, anger, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance, can help you handle their reaction.

You need to resist the urge to yield or counterattack. Yielding compromises your principles, while counterattacking escalates the situation. Instead, stay focused on your core interests and needs.

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To effectively manage the other person's reaction to your Positive No, consider adopting several key strategies from the balcony perspective:

- 1. Go to the Balcony:** The balcony represents a mental space where you gain perspective, calm, and self-control. It helps you maintain focus on your objectives amidst emotional reactions.
- 2. Pause Before Responding:** When faced with the other person's anger or panic, remain calm. Remember to breathe deeply to ground yourself and take a moment before responding, as decisions made in the heat of the moment are often regrettable.
- 3. Name the Game:** Observe the tactics the other person employs, such as flattery, guilt-tripping, minimization, or threats, and mentally name each tactic. This neutralizes their effect on you and increases your self-control.
- 4. Pinch Your Palm:** Physically pinching your palm can help you stay focused on your objectives and maintain composure in the face of provocation.
- 5. No Reaction:** In conflict situations, choosing not to react can be a powerful tool. Not reacting places control in your hands, while reacting gives it to the other party.
- 6. Listen Respectfully:** Listening respectfully can help the other party shift from resistance to acceptance. Sympathizing may weaken your position, but empathy is a form of respect.
- 7. Acknowledgement:** Acknowledging the validity of the other's point without conceding your own is a powerful technique. By saying, "I understand your point; it's valid, but I see the situation differently," you maintain your perspective while showing respect for theirs.
- 8. Replace "But" with "Yes . . . And":** Adopting a both-and mindset, instead of either-or, can be beneficial. Replace the word "but" with "Yes . . . and" to acknowledge the other's point before making your own. This fosters better communication.
- 9. Say "Oh? So? No.":** A simple technique for handling reactions is responding with "Oh?" to acknowledge, "So?" to remain unaffected, and "No" to assert your position. It can help avoid unnecessary confrontation.
- 10. Stand True Like a Tree:** When faced with a strong reaction, remain firm yet flexible, like a tree bending in the wind. Understand the stages of acceptance, anticipate the other's emotional process, and be a detached observer. Not reacting allows the other's emotions to subside, paving the way for acceptance and potentially preserving a positive relationship.

These strategies allow you to manage the other person's reaction effectively, maintain your composure, and stay true to your Yes while dealing with their resistance to your No.

Chapter 8: Underscore Your No

To sustain a No effectively, one can use the power of positive intention, avoiding overreaction and employing gradual repetition. An anchor phrase like "I would prefer not to" can help maintain consistency and resilience when facing relentless pressure. Intentional repetition, while remaining respectful, can convey the message that No means No, leading to a productive outcome without resorting to Plan B.

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When your repeated “No” fails to produce the desired outcome, it becomes necessary to move to the next phase: educating the other party about the repercussions of not accepting your “No.” However, instead of dictating or imposing your will, encourage the other person to understand the consequences of not respecting your boundaries. Pose questions that prompt the other person to reflect on the implications of their actions. For instance, ask about the possible outcomes if an agreement isn’t reached.

If reality-testing questions don’t work, move to a warning. Be clear and specific about the potential consequences if your boundaries are ignored. Warnings are about educating, not punishing. Design consequences that naturally flow from the situation and actions. This approach helps the other person understand the connection between their behavior and the outcome.

If warnings are still disregarded, implement your Plan B without hesitation. In some cases, the most powerful tool is to withdraw your cooperation. This can be a compelling way to motivate change. However, keep the door open for future cooperation if the other person is willing to respect your boundaries.

Even when resorting to your Plan B, exercising power with restraint is important, avoiding vengeance and insensitivity. Respect should be the guiding principle, especially if the ultimate goal is to reach a positive agreement.

Implementing Plan B should be done thoughtfully, perhaps even regretfully. Instead of punishing with anger, it’s wiser to explain consequences with a sense of sadness, maintaining respect in the process. However, make sure your respect is not mistaken for weakness. Consistently enforcing consequences, as difficult as it may be, is essential for credibility.

Employing a Positive No sets a new boundary and reality for others to respect. Let the new reality be the teacher, guiding the other party towards acceptance and paving the way for negotiation and improved relationships.

Chapter 9: Negotiate To Yes

In the final step of the Positive No process, the goal is to achieve a positive outcome, which means saying no and still finding a way to reach agreement.

Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese strategist, once advised leaders to “build a golden bridge for your opponent to retreat,” but in modern terms, it’s more about constructing a bridge for the other party to advance towards a positive solution.

To understand their perspective, we need to recognize the difficulties they might face when saying yes to our proposal. There could be a significant gap between their desires and yours, filled with anxieties, concerns, and potential loss of face. Building a golden bridge means addressing three primary obstacles: unmet needs or concerns, constituent or stakeholder opinion and relationship strain.

The journey towards achieving three types of ‘Yes’—a Yes to a wise agreement, a Yes to approval, and a Yes to a healthy relationship—is the final stage to reach mutually beneficial outcomes in negotiations.

To facilitate a wise agreement, you must not compromise on essential interests and focus on what truly matters. Negotiation is about getting to the right “yes,” one that satisfies both parties’ interests. The goal is to turn the situation into a “both-and” outcome, where both parties benefit, even if it’s not always a perfect win-win scenario.

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In the negotiation process, reaching an agreement is not the end; securing approval from those the other party reports to or cares about, such as their boss, peers, or family is equally important. Many agreements fail because they aren't accepted by key constituents on the other side.

To ensure an agreement's acceptance, you can employ the "Acceptance Speech Test." Imagine the other party needs to present the agreement to their constituents and convince them to support it. Outline the persuasive points they could make. Then, consider the tough questions they might face and the answers they could provide. If you can't envision the other party delivering this acceptance speech persuasively, you need to work on making the proposal more appealing without compromising your essential needs.

Moreover, help the other party save face, as it represents their self-respect and dignity. Sometimes, allowing them to appear stronger or justified in front of their constituents can facilitate acceptance.

After delivering a Positive No, try cultivating and maintaining a healthy relationship with the other party involved. Even if you don't intend to have a close relationship, maintaining a working relationship helps implement agreements and ensure that both parties continue to respect each other's needs. This is especially important if future interactions are likely.

If a relationship has suffered due to the conflict, efforts should be made to repair it. Healing a wounded relationship can make it stronger in the long run. If saying No has depleted the goodwill in the relationship, try to replenish it. You can do that by showing appreciation, taking the initiative to help, and maintaining regular communication.

Ending the interaction on a positive note is equally important. A simple acknowledgement of the difficulties, a thank-you, and a focus on a positive future can leave a lasting impression and increase the likelihood of successful implementation of agreements.

CONCLUSION

The Marriage Of Yes And No

The concept of the Positive No involves marrying the fundamental words "Yes" and "No." Separating them, it's like having "Yes" without "No," which leads to appeasement, or having "No" without "Yes," which results in conflict. Combining them is essential for maintaining individuality, fostering community, seeking justice, and achieving peace.

Practicing the Positive No requires preparation and reflection. It involves paying attention to how one says "No" and understanding personal tendencies such as accommodation, aggression, or avoidance.

Regular practice, even once a day, helps build the skill of delivering a Positive No. For those who tend to accommodate, it's important to overcome the fear of upsetting others and assertively say No when necessary. Seeking feedback, anticipating reactions, and having a plan for responses can strengthen one's ability to deliver a respectful "No."

Saying "No" positively can profoundly impact our lives, relationships, and the world. It is a gift we give to ourselves, creating space for what we want while preserving our values and improving situations. Ultimately, you can say No positively without sacrificing the possibility of reaching agreements. The key is to be true to yourself and respectful to others.