

Setting Limits

Most of us like to be seen as helpful and generous, but for some people, saying "no" can be especially difficult. Cultural expectations can add to this difficulty. Consider the following questions when you are trying to set limits.

WON'T PEOPLE DISLIKE ME IF I SAY "NO" TO THEM?

They may be annoyed at first because they are used to you agreeing to everything they ask. Most people who learn how to say "no" find that in time they actually get a lot more respect from others. Saying "no" is for everyone's benefit.

IF I SAY "NO" WON'T I BECOME A SELFISH PERSON?

Setting limits doesn't mean saying "no" to every request, just balancing things so that others don't depend on you all the time for everything. This gives others a chance to learn how to manage their own lives as we all strive to live in balance.

WHAT IS THE PRICE FOR ALWAYS SAYING "YES?"

- You get completely overwhelmed and over time your health is likely to suffer.
- You have less time and energy to spend with your family and friends.
- You become irritable, exhausted and perhaps depressed.
- You feel unappreciated for what you do.
- You begin to resent the people for whom you do so much.
- You put your personal needs, plans, and dreams on hold, perhaps forever.
- Others expect more and more, even take you for granted.
- Others don't learn to solve their own problems.
- Others don't learn to become independent.
- Others learn to take advantage of helpful people.
- Others fail to become helpful themselves.

HOW DO I START SETTING LIMITS WITH OTHERS?

Choose a small request someone has made that you know they can manage for themselves.

Decide what, when and where you will tell them.

Rehearse what you will say, and practice using a strong assertive voice.

Stay firm; don't argue or become defensive.

Use positive self talk.

Repeat this exercise with other small requests before moving on to more difficult situations.

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