

## Your 'No' Style Sheet | *Not every 'No', Fits Everyone*

When you first start practicing no, it's important to find a way of setting boundaries that fits your personal style. You don't have to sound harsh if you prefer a softer approach, and you don't have to buffer everything if you like being clear and precise. Notice the people you admire and how they set limits. Collect their phrases and try them out!

Think about your own style and experiment, even if it feels uncomfortable at first—that's what practice is for! Below is a starter style sheet. Pick one or two phrases to try this week. If they don't feel right, try others next week. Keep practicing or switching it up until you find what works for you.

## Buffer Words | *How to Soften the Harshness of Your No*

No is a complete sentence, **and** sometimes you may want to soften it. **Buffer phrases let you give a firm no while showing empathy for the other person's discomfort without feeling guilt.** Guilt says, "You might have done something wrong," but setting healthy boundaries is not wrong. Notice that these buffers don't include "sorry." You're allowed to say no, and apologizing can muddy the waters, making it seem like your boundary is wrong. Buffer phrases do the opposite: show empathy while keeping limits clear. **Here's your formula for a buffer phrase: Buffer Word + Boundary/Limit setting sentence.** Below are some sample formulas:

- Bummer! + My plate is too full at the moment so I'll have to say no.
- Unfortunately... + that's not going to work in my schedule.
- Sadly + it's going to be a no for me.

### *Buffer Phrase Words & Phrases Style Options:*

#### Neutral and Professional

- Unfortunately...
- Sadly...
- Honestly...
- Ah...

#### Warm or Funny

- Bummer...
- Oof...
- Shoot...
- Alas...

#### Formal

- Respectfully...
- With regret...
- Regrettably...
- Candidly...

## Pick Your Style | *No Two 'No's' are Alike*

No two 'no's' are alike because no two people are perfectly alike! From firm and powerful to soft and sweet to humorous and snarky, there is a way to set a loving limit within your own personality style!

### Soft No's with Strong Boundaries

#### *A Firm No Can Be Kind*

If you have a softer personality, just because you value being gentle doesn't mean you can't say no. **This style of boundary setting is not modeled often, so it's ok if you don't know what it looks like!** Take some time and reflect on individuals who embody firmness and gentleness. Think: Audrey Hepburn, Atticus Finch, Abraham Lincoln, Pope Saint John Paul II, Thomas More. Think about people from your own life as well! Read their writings, watch their words. Practice their boundary setting phrases. We've collected a number of softer boundary setting phrases for you to start with!

- I'm afraid I can't this time.
- I appreciate you asking, but I won't be able to do that.
- I think I'll sit this one out.
- For me, it's important to take a step back from this.
- Right now I think it's best if I say no.

### The Power of the Humor-Filled No

#### *Funny ways to say no without the bite.*

Some people like to infuse humor into saying no as a way of disarming the no. If you lean towards humor and enjoy making others laugh this might be your style. It's important to not use uncharitable cutting humor, as we still want to uphold the other person's dignity in the process. Again think of individuals who embody humor and firm boundaries, people like Robin Williams, Julie Andrews, Ted Lasso, Philip Neri, and Mother Angelica. Here are some examples of kind, humor filled 'no's:

- Not today, I already promised God I wouldn't overcommit.
- I'm unavailable for that side quest.
- I'd say yes, but I know my future self, and she said no.
- I can't, but I'll pray for you which is probably more helpful!
- If I take that on, something else in my life is going to burst into flames, and I think it might be my sanity.
- I'm going to go recharge before I start buffering...
- Respectful vibes, please and thank you!