

A Lesson in Saying “No!”

Introduction

Ask the group about problems that arise when you can't say “No.” What happens when you say “Yes” but you want to say “No”? Who is it hard to say “No” to? Is it easier to say “No” when the other person demands, or when they coax? When is it not safe to say “No”? (Expect many different answers from different people.)

What would be the advantages of saying “No” more easily or more often? Acknowledge that sometimes you can't say “No” without great cost. For example, you may not be able to say “No” to your boss about your work or to an elder.

Tell the group why your life would be easier if people said “No” to you more often, instead of saying, “Yes” or being non-committal, and then not doing what you asked.

Teach the Skill

Make a flip chart and go over the following points for saying “NO!” (I give some examples in brackets.)

How to say “NO!”

1. Make sure it is safe to say “No.” (Go over some of the times it is not safe—when you're being robbed, or when the other person is drunk or violent, etc.)
2. Say “No” clearly.
3. Reflect the feelings of the other person. (I can see you are angry, or surprised or ..., but I can't babysit for you tomorrow.)
4. Keep saying “No.”
5. Give your reasons if you want to. (Go over some times when it would be to your benefit to give reasons, e.g., to your boss; to someone you want to stay friends with; and some times when it might not be worth while, e.g., when the person wants to argue about your reasons, or you don't care about staying friends.)
6. Don't argue about your reasons. (“You may not agree with me, but I think my homework is important, so I won't go out with the gang tonight.”)
7. Keep saying “No.”

Give the handout to the group (last page).

Practice the Skill

Skits

(A set of scripts for this practice follows. Most scripts are for two people, and, in most cases, the gender doesn't matter. A couple of scripts have an odd number of characters. If your group has an odd number, use one of them so everyone will have a part.)

- Divide the whole group into pairs, with a group of three if your group is odd.
- Give a different script to each group, with a copy for each group member.
- Ask them not to show their scripts to members of other groups, so the performance will be a surprise.
- Ask each small group to prepare to present the skit for the whole class. **THEY DO NOT HAVE TO MEMORIZE THE SCRIPT. THEY SHOULD READ WITH EXPRESSION.** They can add or amend it as they like to make it more realistic. Suggest that they rehearse it at least three times. Give them 15 minutes or so to do this.
- Call the group together and ask each pair to perform their script.
- After each performance, ask the group—did A say no clearly? What did she say to reflect B's feelings? Did she give her reasons? What were they? Did B want to argue about the reasons? What did A say to stay out of the argument about her reasons? (You may have to ask for some or all of the skit to be repeated, in order to get the answers.)

Apply the Skill

Ask each person to agree to ask each of the other people to do something in the coming week, and students are encouraged to say “No” to these requests. Each student is assigned the job of saying “no” to the instructor at least once. The instructor can ask for progress reports on this assignment at various times when the group is together during the week.

Evaluate the Learning

At the end of the week, ask each person in a round: What did you learn about saying “No”? What did you learn about yourself and what makes it hard to say “No”? How and where will you apply this lesson in your life?

A says “No.” (2)

A and M are in the same family.

M: Will you babysit my kids tonight? I want to go to Bingo!

A: No, I can't do it tonight.

M: What do you mean, you can't do it! You always babysit for me.

A; I can see you're surprised, but I can't babysit tonight.

M: Come on! Please look after my kids tonight. I'll give you half of whatever I win at bingo.

A: No, I can't do it. I have a big test tomorrow and I have to study.

M: Ah, you don't have to study for that test—you can do it, no problem.

A: I'm glad you think I'm that smart, but I have to study. I can't babysit.

M: Please, I really need a night out. Besides, I'm feeling lucky.

A: No, sorry, I can't do it this time.

M: Well, maybe I'll call Mom and ask her.

A says “No.” (3)

M and X are underage. They are friends. A is 25, and has known them for years.

M: Will you buy us a case of beer? I won't be old enough to buy it till next month.

A: No, I don't buy booze for other people.

M: What do you mean, you won't buy the beer for us? Uncle Joe always buys us a case.

X: We've got the money. All you have to do is go in and get it and bring it out to us.

A: No, I won't buy you any beer. I don't buy booze for other people.

M: AH, come on! If you don't buy it for us, we won't be able to party.

A: I can see you are mad about this, but I won't do it.

X: It's just a case of beer—we'll buy you a case if you go in and get us a case.

A: No, I don't want to help you get started drinking at your young age.

M: You don't have to worry about us—we don't have a problem with drinking. It'll be all right.

A: You may not agree with me, but I won't buy the booze.

X: Please, just this once. We'll never ask you again.

A: No, sorry, no use asking me.

M: Ah, too bad. Maybe we'll find someone else.

X: Maybe we should just stay home and watch TV tonight.

A says “No.” (2)

(M and A are friends.)

M: Can I borrow five bucks? I’ll pay you back next week when I get my check..

A: No, sorry, I don’t have \$5.00 to lend you.

M: Don’t be so mean. I know you’ve got money in your pocket, and I just need \$5.00.

A: I can see you feel bad about not getting \$5.00 from me, but I don’t have any extra to lend to you.

M: Come on! Please. If I don’t get \$5.00 I won’t be able to buy anything at the yard sale at the Centre.

A: No, I can’t do it. I need my money to buy my spelling book for next week.

M: Ah, you don’t have to buy that book this week—you can buy it next week, after I pay you back. It doesn’t matter if you’re a little late getting the book.

A: You might not agree with me, but I’m going to buy the spelling book this week. I don’t have \$5.00 to lend you.

M: Please, I really want to hit that yard sale. I know there will be great buys there.

A: No, sorry, I can’t do it this time.

M: Well, maybe my brother will lend me the money. I’ll go ask him.

A says “No.” (2)

M is the teacher; A is the student.

M: Will you be the MC at our open house next week? I think you'd be a good MC.

A: No, I don't want to be the MC.

M: What do you mean, you don't want to be the MC? The class needs you to be the MC, because you're such a good speaker.

A: I can see you need me, but I'm saying no to job of MC.

M: Come on! It's not that much work.

A: No, I can't do it. I have a lot of things I have to do for my family these days. We're getting ready for a family gathering.

M: Ah, don't worry about that. Your family will be glad if you're the MC for us. They'll be proud of you.

A: You might not agree, but I have to take care of my family responsibilities. I can't be the MC.

M: Are you sure you won't change your mind? I think you'd like the job.

A: No, sorry, I can't do it this time.

M: Well, I guess I'll have to ask one of the other students to be MC.

A says “No.” (2)

M is a young guy; A is a young woman; he is asking for a date.

M: Will you go out with me tomorrow night? There’s a dance at the gym.

A: Thanks for asking, but I don’t want to go to the dance with you.

M: What do you mean, you don’t want to go with me? It’ll be cool to go to the dance together. We’ll have a good time.

A: I can see you are surprised, but I’m saying no, thanks.

M: What the...! Do you think you’re too good for me? Don’t be so stuck up. Come to the dance with me.

A: No, I don’t want to go with you. I have a boyfriend in Nanaimo, and I don’t go out with other guys.

M: Ah, don’t even think about him. He’ll never find out that you went out with me. He’s probably going out with some other girl in Nanaimo anyway.

A: You might think it’s okay, but it’s not okay with me. I’m not going to any dances until my boyfriend gets back.

M: You’ll be sorry, sitting at home when you could be having a good time with me.

A: The answer is still no, thanks.

M: Well, there are lots of other girls who’d be glad to go with me. I’ll just ask someone else.

A says “No.” (3)

A, B and C are friends

A: Hi! What’s up?

B: Nothing much. We want to ask you something.

C: Yeah. Can we borrow your car tonight?

A: No, you can’t have my car tonight. I’ve got to go to work.

B: We thought we could drive you to work, and then take the car...

C: Yeah. We’ll bring it back at the end of your shift, and you can drive us home.

A: No, you can’t borrow my car. The last time I lent it to you guys, you brought it back late and it was full of empty bottles and burger wrappers.

B: Well, it won’t happen again.

C: Yeah, we’re sorry. We’ll bring it back on time tonight, and we’ll even take it to the car wash!

A: No. I hear you’re sorry, but I’m still saying no.

B: Some friend you are!

C: Yeah, some friend!

A: No car, no way, not tonight!

A says “No.” (2)

A is an adult student. B is A’s parent. You can call B “Mom,” or “Dad.”

A: Hi Mom (Dad). How’s it going?

B: Pretty good. I need you to pick me up and take me to the mall today.

A: When do you want to go?

B: I’ll be ready around 11:00. Pick me up then.

A: I’m sorry Mom (Dad). I can’t pick you up at 11:00. I’m in school then.

B: But you always pick me up to go to the mall. I need to go today.

A: I can see you’re surprised. I guess lots of things will be a little different now I have to go to school every day.

B: Yeah. You can miss school this once. The teacher won’t mind.

A: The teacher might not mind, but I’m really trying to go to school every day from 9:30 to 2:30. I get an hour for lunch, though. Can I pick you up at noon?

B: Well, I guess so. Just so long as I get to the mall today, that will be alright.

A says “No.” (2)

A and B are **two teachers**.

A: Whew! I’ve had a hard day today. So many new students. I like them, but it’s hard to remember everybody’s name. And there is so much to do the first week. I’ll be glad to get home tonight and rest up.

B: I’m tired too. It’s always like this the first week. Next week things will settle down a lot, don’t you think?

A: I hope so. But I feel good, too. We have a great bunch of students this year.

B: I need to ask you a favour. I hope you’re not too tired to do it for me.

A: What do you need?

B: Well, you know the math books I ordered? They sent them to the wrong place. They’re up in Nanaimo, not down here. I’m wondering if you would drive up to Nanaimo tonight and pick them up. I can’t do it, because I have that meeting with the principal after school.

A: I’m sorry, I can’t do it tonight. I’m too tired to add a couple of extra hours to my day, driving to Nanaimo and back.

B: Well, I don’t know what to do if we don’t have the math books for tomorrow. How can I teach math with no books?

A: I’m sure you’ll think of something! But I’m going to say no, because if I drove up to Nanaimo and back, I couldn’t teach anything tomorrow!

B: I wouldn’t ask if I wasn’t desperate. I have to see the principal after school, and I have to get those books from Nanaimo today.

A: I can see you’re in a tight spot. Sorry I can’t help today.

B: Well, I have to do something. Maybe I’ll ask the principal if we can postpone the meeting until tomorrow. Maybe I’ll see if somebody else is going up to Nanaimo today, and they could bring the books back. Maybe I’ll do some math tomorrow that doesn’t need the book. Maybe I’ll give them a test! Let me see, I’m sure I can come up with something.



How to say "No!"

1. Check that it's safe to say "No."
2. Say "No," clearly.
3. Reflect the feelings of the other person.
("I can see you are angry, or surprised, or ...")
4. Keep saying "No."
5. Give your reasons, if you want to.
6. Don't argue about your reasons.
("Maybe you don't agree, but I think my homework is important, so I won't go out with the gang tonight.")
7. Keep saying "No."