

THE ART OF SAYING NO

HOW TO STAND YOUR GROUND,
RECLAIM YOUR TIME AND ENERGY, AND
REFUSE TO BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED
(WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY!)

DAMON ZAHARIADES

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Catapult You PRODUCTIVE

THE **TOP 10** HABITS YOU
MUST DEVELOP TO GET
MORE THINGS DONE



Damon Zah

In the following pages, I'm going to teach you how to say no with confidence and without guilt. Along the way, you'll develop the assertiveness you need to turn down requests if they fail to align with your goals, needs, and convictions.

NOTABLE QUOTABLES ABOUT SAYING NO



If you don't prioritize your life, someone else will.

- Greg McKeown

A 'no' uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a 'yes' merely uttered to please, or worse, to avoid trouble.

- Mahatma Gandhi

The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say 'no' to almost everything.”

- Warren Buffett

PART I

THE PEOPLE-PLEASING HABIT



Think of a friend or acquaintance whom you'd consider to be a typical people pleaser. This individual is probably one of the nicest people you know. He or she is always ready to lend a hand. You can count on him or her to help you whenever the need arises. This person will gladly abandon his or her personal pursuits to cater to *your* wants and needs.

Does this behavior sound disturbingly familiar to you in a personal way? Do you notice aspects of it in yourself? For example, when someone requests your help, do you immediately set aside whatever you're working on and say "*Sure!*"?

And here's the bigger issue: do you regularly feel unhappy, stressed, and exhausted as a result of constantly putting other people's priorities ahead of your own?

If so, this book is for you.

Saying no to people is one of the most important skills you can develop. It frees you to pursue your own interests, both personal and professional. To that end, it'll boost your productivity, improve your relationships, and fill you with a sense of confident calm that may seem alien to you at this moment.

The ability to say no is liberating. But developing the skill is often difficult. For most of us, it requires undoing years of practice to the contrary.

For *some* of us, learning to say no counteracts a lifetime of indoctrination from our parents, teachers, bosses, coworkers, and family members.

But it's worth the effort. Once you possess the ability to say no with confidence and grace, and do so with regularity, you'll notice changes in how others perceive you. They'll have more respect for you; they'll place a greater value on your time; and they'll come to see you as a leader rather than a follower.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Interested to know more? Are you ready to finally curb your inclination to please people by saying yes all the time? If so, let me describe my personal experience with being an unabashed people pleaser...

MY PAST LIFE AS A PEOPLE PLEASER



I'm a recovering people pleaser. If you had known me in my high school and college days, you needn't have ever wanted for help. I was there for you. All you had to do was ask. I'd happily sacrifice my own pursuits to help you pursue your own.

This tendency to say yes regardless of my personal circumstances was borne of several factors. We'll cover them in *Part II: Reasons We Struggle To Say No*. For now, it's enough to say that I was the quintessential people pleaser.

And I was miserable.

Every time I said yes to someone, it felt like I was doing the right thing. I was making the other person happy. So how could such a decision be regrettable?

But a little voice would always opine that saying yes to others was, in effect, saying no to myself. The time given would no longer be available to spend toward my own pursuits. The money given would no longer be available to finance my own needs and interests.

And sure enough, I allowed others to use my time, money, and even my labor toward *their* interests while my interests were placed on the back burner.

For example, I owned a pickup truck while attending college. That made me a prime candidate for helping my friends move. As you might expect, I

was regularly asked to do so.

Being a diehard people pleaser, I was quick to say yes. But it was always in opposition to the small voice in my head berating me for putting my own interests and priorities on hold. Worse, this voice was persistent. And it slowly caused me to become resentful - of myself as well as the people who routinely requested my help.

It was a downward spiral.

Each time I was asked to do something for someone, I said yes in spite of myself. So ingrained was the habit of catering to others. But with each acquiescence, a feeling of discontent grew inside me, setting the stage for bitterness and despair. Time and again, I sacrificed my own interests to help others, knowing that doing so was making me increasingly unhappy.

I had no one to blame but myself.

At some point, I decided that I had had enough. I began to reject all requests to help friends move. In fact, I turned down nearly all requests for help of any kind.

In retrospect, I regret taking this approach. It was a knee-jerk reaction spurred by my growing resentment and self-loathing, and too severe in its making. It took me years of experimentation and practice to learn to say no with more grace and thoughtfulness.

The Art Of Saying NO will help you make the transition from always pleasing others to prioritizing your own needs and desires. And importantly, I'll show you how to do it without taking the regrettable hardline approach I used long ago.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIORITIZING YOUR NEEDS



One of the most valuable lessons I've learned is that no one will protect my time or prioritize my needs as vigilantly as me. That's understandable. Most people act out of self-interest; they naturally put their own priorities ahead of others' priorities. But it means each of us is responsible for making sure our personal needs are met.

No one is going to do it for us.

Moreover, it's important that we attend to our own needs *before* attending to the needs of others. This assertion may make you feel uncomfortable, particularly if you strive to be loving and giving in all that you do. But allowing your needs to remain unaddressed while you continuously cater to others is the path toward resentment and bitterness. It can even become a health issue if you run yourself ragged (I speak from experience).

When I advise prioritizing your needs over the needs of others, I'm not suggesting you ignore the latter. Not at all! You can still be there for friends, family members, coworkers, and even strangers, and help them when asked. The important thing is that you avoid abandoning your own priorities in the process. After all, how much use will you be to others over the long run if you don't first attend to yourself?

For example, suppose you agree to help people so often that you begin to skip meals, sacrifice sleep, and forsake activities you enjoy. You'll gradually become so exhausted, irritable, and unhappy that you won't be able or willing to help others.

This is the reason I recommend attending to your needs *first*. Doing so gives you the freedom to attend to other people's needs when you have the time, energy, and inclination. You'll be able to decide to help on a case-by-case basis without risking or forfeiting your own health and happiness.

Consider how flight attendants explain airline safety to passengers. In the event the cabin decompresses, you're supposed to put on *your* oxygen mask before helping others put on *their* masks. Help yourself first. Then, assist others. These instructions aren't intended to promote self-preservation. Rather, the airline knows that if you help others first, you risk succumbing to hypoxia. And that would prevent you from helping *anyone*.

When you prioritize your needs over the needs of others, some folks will persist in their attempts to recruit you to their ends. They won't take no for an answer.

In such cases, you'll need to be assertive...