

GETTING TO NO (A COMPASSIONATE, LIFE-SERVING NO)

Saying no is always an option. But still, the thought of saying “no” might bring up resentment, anger, self-frustration, disappointment, pressure, stress, confusion, loss of self, paralysis, self-judgement...

What comes up for you when you want to say no but don't?

Marshall Rosenberg:

“An important part of self-compassion is to make choices motivated purely by our desire to contribute to life rather than out of fear, guilt, shame, duty, or obligation. An otherwise joyful activity performed out of obligation, duty, fear, guilt, or shame will lose its joy and eventually engender resistance.”

In what circumstances do you think it would be healthy to say no?

SELF-EMPATHY PROCESS

A quality of being present with oneself — hearing, seeing, and receiving oneself patiently without judgment, self-criticism, rationalizing, or trying to take oneself somewhere else. Holding space for self-reliant inward listening. Being present for what is going on.

With gentle curiosity:

- What are my initial feelings?
- What are the underlying feelings?
- How do these feelings indicate what I'm needing or longing for?

EXERCISE ONE: TRANSFORMING HAVE TO INTO CHOOSE TO

1. Indicate something in your life that you don't experience as life-enriching. This is something that you do out of obligation or because you perceive yourself to have no choice.

write quarterly employee evaluations

2. Write the words “I choose to” in front of your statement.

Acknowledge to yourself that you are doing this out of choice, not because you are being forced.

I choose to write quarterly employee evaluations

3. Write the words “because I want...” after your statement.

Get in touch with the intention behind your choices and complete the statement.

I choose to write quarterly employee evaluations because I want the stability and dependability that comes with the income I get from my job.

4. Reflection:

- Do you feel content with that motivation?
- If not, what are some other ways for you to meet these underlying needs?
- Would you like to say no?

EXERCISE TWO: SAYING NO – PAST CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Think of a situation where you wanted to say no but you didn't.

2. Self-empathy process

- I would have liked to say no because I was needing:
- But I didn't say no because...
 - ... they were needing:
 - ... I was *also* needing:
 - ... I didn't know what I was needing.
 - ... _____.

3. Practice saying a compassionate no aloud

- I heard a request for me to:
- It seems like they were needing:
- I was needing:
- I would have liked:

Learning reflection: What did you notice? Did anything shift or settle? Did you learn anything?

EXERCISE THREE: SAYING NO – ONGOING OR UPCOMING

1. Think of an ongoing or upcoming situation where you would like to say no.

2. Self-empathy process

- I would like to say no because I am needing:
- But I'm struggling to say no because...
 - ... they are needing:
 - ... I am *also* needing:
 - ... I don't know what I am needing.
 - ... _____.

3. Practice saying a compassionate no aloud

- I heard a request for me to:
- It seems like they are needing: [What are their *needs*? Separate this from you.]
- I'm needing:
- I would like to:

4. (Optional) Make a clear and compassionate request

UNDERSTANDING / EMOTIONAL HONESTY

We wish to hear the listener reflect their (emotional) understanding of our words.

"Communicating clearly is important to me; would you reflect what you just heard me say?"

"Would you tell me how you feel having heard what I just said?"

ACTION

Specific, doable action that we hope would fulfill our needs.

"Would you be willing to...?"

Learning reflection: What did you notice? Did anything shift or settle? Did you learn anything?