

Caring Safely®

Assertive Communication and Boundaries

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Saying “No” for Yes

- Why is it important for you to say “no”?
- Think of your ACT paradigm and the top right corner which includes behaviors/activities that take you closer to living your values
- We need to say “no” in order to make the time and energy for those behaviors/activities
- We need to say “no” to make time for our SUNs
- We need to say “no” to say “yes” to our lives. We work to live, not live to work.
- “It’s gonna get weird before it gets better”

USE Model

- **Understand:** Let the other person know that you understand the situation from their point of view
- **State:** Say the facts of the situation from your point of view
- **Explain:** Describe what you would like to see done about the situation now and in the future

Personalize and Integrate with Handout

Celebrate Uncomfortable

- Think of some things you can start saying “no” to that are not perceived as threatening and then build up:
 - No thank you to extra food, stuff you don’t want, tasks around the house, extra tasks at work, volunteer request.
- If it’s not 100% yes, then it’s “no”.
- Use the deep breathing, sensory grounding while implementing the USE model to say “no” and then **CELEBRATE** the uncomfortable part that comes with it, as well as the fact that you’ve just asserted yourself and set a boundary. You are creating long-term change for sustainable caring and improved quality of life.

USE: When they don't respect your boundary

- What happens when you execute a beautiful USE Statement and the other person ignores you and keeps asking.
- Depends – personal right to say “no” – say, “thank you for the offer to” and repeat your statement exactly as you said it the first time. If they still continue to push, do not engage in arguing, simply say you need to end this conversation.
- If at work and it's not a required activity, it's usually respected. Again, I like to add “thank you for the offer.... USE Statement”
- If it's a required activity then you may not have a choice as long as you want to stay in the position. Can you negotiate for a different timeline or support to make the task more manageable?

Assertive Communication and Stress Response

- A perceived threat, including potential conflict, can trigger the stress response (sympathetic branch of nervous system) so that your body goes into fight or flight (or freeze) mode.
- Adrenaline, nor-adrenaline, cortisol through body. Pupils dilate. Heart rate increases. Breathing becomes shallow. Blood from extremities to core organs. Digestive system shuts down. All to prepare you to fight or flee the perceived threat.
- Also make rational thinking and logical problem solving more difficult.
- You want to prevent or interrupt this stress response when asserting yourself so that you can stay clear and focused on your boundary.
- By trigger your relaxation response (parasympathetic branch of nervous system) you can regulate your nervous system while setting your boundary.

Deep Vs. Shallow Breathing

- Deep Vs. Shallow Breathing
- Keep breathing normally and put one hand on your chest and one on your belly (just under ribs).
- Chest rising = shallow breath
- Belly expanding = deep breath
- Fully exhale before taking first deep breath
- Inhale through nose, exhale through mouth

Deep Breathing Practice Handout

Extended Exhale

- Purpose of the extended exhale is to trigger the relaxation response.
Do not try if you have a heart condition or a health condition that can be impacted by triggering the relaxation response, taking deep breaths or expanding the belly. Please check with your doctor first if you have any of these concerns.
- Inhale through nose. Exhale through mouth.
- Extended exhale counts:
 - 3-6 breathing
 - 4-2-6 breathing (some people feel anxious when they have the pause in between)

Extended Exhale Practice Handout

Sensory Grounding While Breathing

- Using a one of your senses, to focus on something neutral, in the present moment. Combine with deep breathing.
 - Rubbing fingers together
 - Touching ring
 - Focusing on feet touching the ground
- Regularly practice you deep breathing when you are relaxed and combine it with the sensory grounding movement. This will help your body shift into relaxation more quickly when you're stress response has been triggered.

Guilt and Boundaries

- Guilt is an appropriate emotion if the action you took was with the intention to harm someone.
- Guilt is not an appropriate emotion if the action you took was not with the intention to harm someone.
- Saying “no” to take care of yourself or your loved ones is not with the intention to harm someone.
- Even if the other person feels/states it's being done to harm them, they may be trying to manipulate the situation and keep the pattern of you helping in place.
- They need to “own” their own thoughts/emotions/behaviors just like you are.