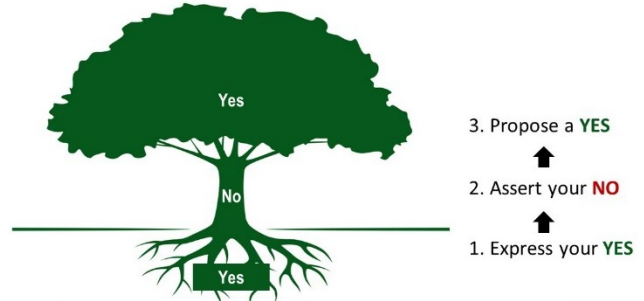


The Power of a Positive No

Offering a Positive No is a powerful and respectful way to create healthy boundaries around our time and attention (and all other aspects of our lives).

Underlying Positive No is a “Yes”, something we care about. We say no in service to our “Yes”. For example, if someone asks you to work on a project you clearly don’t have time for, your “yes” might reflect a commitment to excellence in your work. Saying no to the request to work on another project allows you to support your commitment.



There is a second “Yes” in a Positive No, the invitation to the person to whom you’re saying no to engage in another way. In the example above, your second “Yes” might be an offer to renegotiate the timeline for the project or you might suggest another person who could fill your role on the new project team. In this way, you’re not only preserving, but potentially enhancing, the relationship.

This process was developed by William Ury and his colleagues at the [Harvard Negotiation Project](#). It has been used around the world as part of their work in negotiation and mediation.

To explore this topic in depth, see: [The Power of a Positive No: How to Say No and Still Get to Yes](#) by William Ury. Also see [Getting To Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In](#) by Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patten.

Practicing a Positive No

Instructions: Fill in the worksheet below and then take turns practicing your Positive No with a partner.

1. Articulate the situation: Describe the situation where you want to say NO.



Power of a Positive No Worksheet.docx

- Uncover your YES:** By saying “No”, what are you saying “Yes” to? What do you care about in this situation?

- Express your YES:** Craft a short statement expressing your YES. How will you actually say it to the other person?

- Assert your NO:** Craft a short statement asserting your NO. How will you put your “No” into words?

- Propose a YES:** Craft a short statement proposing your YES. How will you invite the person to engage in a different way?