



Combat Stress by “NOing” Your Limits

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We are being asked to do more and more, but the number of minutes in a day doesn't increase. Some days I want to scream, “Gray, gray, please go away and don't come back another day!” Okay, I'm just kidding, but I do have a point. For many of us, our level of stress continues to increase and finding ways to better manage it could likely benefit us all. It could also save us a few bucks at the salon.

Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no “one size fits all” solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation. However, one specific strategy that I want to highlight today is how to handle things when we are being asked to do yet another thing on top of the mounting pile of things that we haven't yet got to. This strategy is “learning how to say *no*.”

Learning to say “no” is about knowing your limits and sticking to them. Whether in your professional or personal life, taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress. So how do we say the difficult words of “no” or “I can't”? Below are five ways I have found to effectively say “no” with the sole intent of setting limits with others, *not* to merely escape responsibilities that we know should be handled:

1. “Sandwich Approach” No: - Start out with positive statement, decline & end on a positive note.
2. “Negotiated” No: - Negotiate with the requester, especially on the scope/deadline of the project.
3. “Not Now” No: - Delay working on the task or project (*short time-frame*); express you are unable to do it now, but you can start it in two weeks.
4. “Supportive” No: - Support the requester in finding help or resources.
5. “Creative Solution” No: - Work together to find a creative solution.

When deciding to set limits using a soft “no”, ensure that you express empathy, that your body language, tone and word choice are aligned, and that you are in an environment where you can candidly discuss options. Communicating “no” should also be used with discretion and certainly not every time you are asked to do something.

There is certainly no “one size fits all” solution to managing stress, but hopefully you now have one additional strategy that may prove to be helpful. As you look at the overflowing inbox, the maxed out voice-mail box, or the Chia-Pet-like growing pile on your desk, remember there are healthy ways of coping with and managing stress. Most do, though, require you to make a change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction. One is certainly far easier than the other.