

TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 189-JUST SAY NO

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 189.

If you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that just might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you might be looking for. Then, we'll consider how it might speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night.

So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen.

Have you ever had trouble saying "no"? Maybe you didn't want to hurt someone's feelings, maybe you wanted someone to like you, maybe you just didn't have the right words. If so, you may consider today's episode your permission slip to proclaim the great big ol' NUH UH that's in your gut.

Elizabeth Perry, writing for Better Up, says that For some adults, the inability to say no stems from childhood. From an early age, children are taught to be polite and forthcoming. If a parent or teacher asked a child to do something, saying no was interpreted as a form of backtalk. In some cases, refusing an adult meant punishment or negative reinforcement.

However, this can cause issues around communication and self-assertion. Being raised to believe that saying no is bad makes it difficult for children to communicate their preferences. For some people, this inability to speak up for themselves continues into adulthood.

Another reason you may find it difficult to say no is if you doubt yourself. With imposter syndrome, you feel like you are not good enough to do the role that you are in.

Because of these feelings, you avoid saying no to others. You are afraid they will think you are unable to perform your roles and responsibilities. It can also make it hard to say no to yourself. You constantly feel that you have to say yes to prove to yourself that you can actually do your job.

There is also empathy and human nature to consider. We are social creatures that rely on human connection. Because of our need to belong, we are afraid to disappoint others or create conflict.

This kind of behavior shows our inherent desire to avoid that conflict or keep the peace. But it's possible that our need to be liked can do us more harm than good.

Therefore! You should absolutely feel justified saying no

1. If you feel uncomfortable
2. When you just feel guilty or obliged
3. When you're overloaded
4. If the request crosses personal boundaries
5. If you're only saying yes to please someone else.

It can take a little practice, however, to convey the message in a most effective way. We'll talk about that in a minute. But first—a couple of tips on how NOT to say no:

First, don't "ghost" people—that is, just not respond to their request by ignoring their email, their text, their call. Like Oprah did to me. Yes, you heard that right. Oprah.

In 1989, my first book was published—*A Hope Deferred: A Couple's Guide to Coping with Infertility*. One Wednesday night in 1990, my editor called to tell me that a programmer from the Oprah Winfrey Show was going to produce an episode on infertility, and wanted me to come on to talk about my experience and the book.

Do I even need to tell you that this sent me to the moon with excitement? Of course, I pretty much yelled, "YES!" and my editor said that a producer would call me to make arrangements to fly out and tape the show the next week. Of course, I went to school the next day and told EVERYONE I knew that I was going to be on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. It was glorious. I reveled in the admiration of colleagues, the excitement of students, and my own rapidly inflating sense of self-importance.

And then I waited for the call. And waited. And waited. Finally, after a week, I got the programmer's number from my editor and called. It was legit, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, and I asked for the guy (I still remember his name). I left a message. And waited. And waited. And waited. After another week, I called again and was told, "Oh he was supposed to let you know that we decided not to do the show on infertility." Click.

Not cool, friends. Do not say no by not saying anything. It can be traumatizing.

Second, don't, for fear of hurting someone's feelings, say yes when you really want to say no, then come back and actually say no after you said yes. It's so confusing, and possibly hurtful.

I was in a girls' club in high school that had two functions every year—a banquet and a dance—and if you wanted to go, you had to do the asking. Starting my freshman year, I tried a variety of techniques. The first was to approach “Larry,” a buddy, claim that I had two “extra” tickets to a banquet, and ask him if he wanted to go. It worked.

For the next event, I worked up to asking “Curly,” a guy I actually had a huge crush on. There is, of course, much more at stake when you put yourself out there for someone who makes your palms sweat, but I was determined to go to this dance with somebody I liked—and I mean “liked” liked. So I called him. I could tell that I caught him off guard, but he said yes.

Ecstatic, I started making plans. Two days later he called me, and said he couldn't go after all. Something about having to wash his hair.

I was crushed, but not destroyed.

Determined to get back on the horse, I called “Moe.” By this time though, my self-confidence was waning. I worked up the nerve to dial the number...but hung up after the first ring. (Obviously, this was before any kind of caller id. How did we navigate life without caller id?).

“Okay, this is just dumb,” I told myself. “Do you want to go to this dance or not?”

“Yes, yes,” my wimpy self answered.

“Then just do it,” my brave self commanded.

So I dialed the number again. The phone rang once...then twice. Moe's little brother answered. “Could I speak to Moe?” I squeaked in a barely audible voice.

“Surrerre,” said Little Brother, who then covered the mouthpiece and, in a singsongy falsetto voice said, “Moooooee! It's a girrrrrr!”

I couldn't help it. I hung up. And then I called “Larry,” claimed that I had two extra tickets to a dance, and asked him if he wanted to go. It worked again. Believe it or not, this went on for four years.

So if you, like me, have a history of being inappropriately “no-ed to” even once, you know the residual insecurities that result can last a long time, and make you do things like go to unromantic dances with buddies for your whole high school career.

And good for you, for being sensitive to the way you say no. But it's even more insensitive to say yes, then no. So consider some ideas for ways to do it better.

Here are some phrases you can use in your response:

1. Sadly, I have something else going on.
2. I have another commitment.
3. I wish I were able to.
4. I'm afraid I can't.
5. I don't have the bandwidth for that right now.
6. Thanks for thinking of me. However, I'm not able to.
7. I'm sorry, I'm not able to fit this in.
8. Unfortunately, I already have plans. Maybe next time.

You can use a little humor, and say something like, "Alas, such a task is no match for my incompetency," but be careful to be direct. It's really important to also use the word "no" in your response.

"No." It's a one-word sentence, says Deidra Rose on Quora.com. It's a boundary. It's not open to interpretation.

Can I get your number? No.

Do you want to go on a date? No, thank you.

How about a double helping of liver? No, I am fine, thank you.

We strongly encourage you to work overtime this weekend. No, I am not available.

Can you watch my dog this weekend? I know it's last minute, but otherwise I will have to pay for a sitter and everyone else said no. No, I'm sorry. Maybe next time.

Will you marry me? I have been thinking about this a long time, and while I love you very much, I am not ready. No.

*I know it's my turn to do the dishes, but I don't feel like it right now. Can you do it pleeeeeaaaaassee? **No.***

Can we have cookies for dinner, Grandma? NO! Your mother will kill me.

Can I borrow \$500? Absolutely not, dude. NO.

Dad, can I have a new iPhone? NO.

Mom, Dad won't let me have a new iPhone! I agree with him. The answer is no.

It's fun and liberating and good practice to say "no." "No" is a valid answer you don't have to apologize for or make excuses about or justify. Just use it and mean it. And feel the joy.

And so, my friend,

May you understand that saying “no” to one thing means saying “yes” to something else,

And may you be compassionate and clear and firm when you let your no be no,

And may you always seek out and follow God’s leading, like my friend Andy who, when approached by a church member, asking him to volunteer to teach children, said a clear, direct “no.” And when said church member asked, “Will you at least pray about it?” Andy said, “Sure.” And he looked down, and closed his eyes for exactly two seconds as he heard God speak to his heart. Then looked up and said, “No.”

Sometimes God’s direction is very clear. And quick.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who feel guilty for saying anything but yes, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at jillbaughan.com, click on a podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Just say “no,” my friend. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

NOTES

Perry, Elizabeth. “How to say no to others (and why you shouldn’t feel guilty).” *Better Up*, January 7, 2022.

<https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-say-no>

Rose, Deidra. “How do you say no without being rude?” *Quora*, 2019.

<https://www.quora.com/How-do-I-disrespectfully-and-rudely-say-no>