

# EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

## EPISODE 121: JUST SAY NO

(Listen to this episode and find all the links at [TaraSwiger.com/podcast121](https://TaraSwiger.com/podcast121))

This week we're re-running a popular episode from the past - How to Say NO (for fun + profit!)

I hear so often from people who have a really hard time saying no from people who are trying to obligate them to do something they don't want to do. So today we're going to talk about why and how you need to say no, and how to get comfortable doing that.

For a few months now, the Starship captains have been asking me for a class on how to say no. I joked that the class would be way too short - because my answer is, "Just do it!" But they insisted that they needed a class, so I've put it together in 3 parts:

1. Part 1 - [on the blog](#)
2. Part 2 - [this podcast episode!](#)
3. Part 3 - [a worksheet](#)

### WHY SAY NO?

You have limited time and energy - you can't do everything! In order to have the time + energy to focus on what you really want to do, this means you need to say no to the things you don't want to do.

This might mean saying no to...

- ★ Friends + family asking you to make them something for free
- ★ Crazy custom orders from your customers that will eat up time and reduce the quality of your product or brand
- ★ "Opportunities to spread the word" that are really just excuses to ask you to do unpaid work
- ★ Spending time on non-work related favors
- ★ Requests for donated projects
- ★ Family things you don't want to participate in
- ★ Requests for help (money, donations of work to charity events)
- ★ Family members who ask you to take your work time to help them with something else

## HOW TO MAKE IT EASIER TO SAY NO

### Keep in mind your YES

What is your NO making space for? That thing is your YES - the thing you're excited + enthusiastic about, that you want to spend your time and energy doing. Keeping this at the front of your mind will help you say no to things that will take you away from that.

Not sure about your YES? Think about your big goals - what do you want out of your business? How do you want to spend your time? Who do you want to serve? What do you want to make?

In order to make that vision happen, you have to say no to anything that doesn't fit into it. It's easier to say NO if you remember what that allows you to say YES to instead.

Note: Sometimes this is hard to do! You might be saying no to having coffee with friends because you need your working time. Eyes on the prize!

### Set boundaries + quotas

If you find that you need to limit the number of projects, custom orders, etc. that you say yes to, figure out how many you want to do and are able to do without overloading your schedule. Then set your quota so that you will only take on that many projects or custom orders at one time.

As an example, a knitwear designer submitted several proposals to magazines, and to her surprise they were ALL accepted, at the same time. So then she struggled to find a balance between completing this magazine work and continuing to build her independent publishing catalog of designs. I suggested that she decide how many magazine designs she wants to do in a year, quarter, or month - and then limit her submissions to that amount. Once you get to the point where most or all of your proposals are being accepted, then it's time to limit the number of proposals.

Other designers have to do the opposite - they work so much on independently published patterns that they don't take the time to submit their work to publications. So they might set a goal of how many pattern submissions they want to to various publications make in a year.

Once you've got a boundary, use it to explain this to other people. "I only have space on my calendar for three clients, so I can't take on a new one right now." Or, "I've already published X patterns for publications this year, and that's my limit, so I'm sorry but I can't design for you right now."

## Do the opportunity cost math

Opportunity cost refers to what this project you're saying yes to is going to cost you, in terms of other opportunities. In other words, if you say yes to this, what won't you be doing? If it keeps you from working on your regular products, how many won't you be able to make? If you're working with publisher A, will that stop you from being able to work with publisher B? If you move your shop off Etsy, what will you gain from the new shop and what will you lose from not having Etsy any more?

This type of math can be applied to almost anything: product giveaway requests, craft show participation, custom orders, client requests, a new product launch, writing a book, creating an online class.

Once you do the math, figure out if the cost is worth doing the project. If the math doesn't work out, that's your rationale for not doing the project.

## SCRIPTS FOR SAYING NO

When someone asks you something and you don't want to automatically agree, here are some other options available to you to help you learn to say no.

### Ask for more time

Get in the habit of replying to requests by saying, "I need some time to think about this. I'll get back to you in X days." This helps you avoid reacting in the moment, which sometimes causes you to say an automatic yes (or no) without thinking it through. Give yourself some space to really consider the project and come up with a well-informed response. This is especially useful if someone asks you for something in person, which is really hard to say no to if you haven't been practicing.

So do that - practice it! Ask for extra time to think it over ANY time someone asks you for something (your spouse asks what you want for dinner, your friend wants to make a coffee date, a mom at school asks you to help out with the carnival).

This only works if you give a specific amount of time to get back to them, and then stick to that time! That way people don't feel like you're just blowing them off, and it also puts a deadline on your process of thinking it through. It also prevents a situation where they push back or ask you the same thing repeatedly, because you've put a clear timeline on your response. This takes off a lot of the pressure of this type of situation.

If someone is particularly aggressive and pushes you to make a decision, you can say, "I don't want to agree to anything I will have to back out of later. I'm going to take some time to think about it, so I'll get back to you by {DATE}." This shows them that you want to make a good decision and not a rash one. If they continue to push, you can say, "I'm feeling pressured right now to make a decision, so if I can't have more time to think about it, I'll just have to say no." This establishes the concept that if they push you, they're going to push you toward a no. This stops a bullying person from trying to push you to say yes; it proves them that they're actually going to get the opposite response.

This takes some balls (or ovaries!) to say no in this way. But it stops you from agreeing to things you don't really want to do, and then ending up regretting that rash decision. You deserve to stand up for your right to take some time to make a decision!

Notice that this script doesn't necessarily mean you're saying NO! It just means that whatever decision you do make is the right one for YOU, because you took the time you needed to make it.

### Keep it professional

Make this about the business, not about you and the other person. One of our Starship captains was having a hard time saying no to friends and family who were asking her to make her products for them for free. Before she had a business she made these types of items as gifts all the time, but now that she had started a business it was taking time away from her work to make these freebies.

What she wanted to say to these people was, "Heck no I can't make you that for free! You can pay for it like everyone else!" But she also didn't want to damage her relationships with these people, so instead we came up with this response: "I'm in the process of building my business by making items like these. I don't have time to make them for free right now because I need to use all my materials + time to make items I'm going to sell. But if you'd like to buy one, you can find it here/come to X craft show/they're \$15, let me know if you're interested."

This type of response is professional and cool, rather than a harsh reaction to someone who doesn't realize that their request is offensive to you. In most cases they're not trying to demean the value of your work, but they maybe just don't understand that you're doing this as a business now or really grasp the full scope of what they're asking you to do.

## Make a counter-offer

If you want to maintain a relationship with a person, or you'd like to collaborate with them in the future but you just can't fit it in right now, you don't have to say NO forever. Instead, make an offer for another way to work together that fits within your timeline.

For example: a client of mine had a request for a custom order that she knew was going to turn out pretty ugly. She didn't want to make that item according to the customer's parameters because she didn't want her name on something that wouldn't turn out looking good. When I spoke with her, I suggested she say something like, "I'm not sure that would turn out very well. What if, instead, I {insert suggestion for something that would look better here}?"

Another option is to scale down an over-the-top request into a counter-offer that's more reasonable. I can't write a 3000-word article by the end of the week, but I can give you a 500-word article within two weeks. Make it a question they can say yes or no to. In this scenario, remember: YOU are the expert. You know what works best for your products, you know where your business is going, you know the best way to spend your time. So when someone comes to you with an outrageous request, remember that you get to set the parameters of that request, because they're coming to you.

The key is to be confident that your work has value, and so if they end up turning down your counter-offer, that's OK! That just means you have more time to work on your YES.

## Avoid over-explaining

You do not owe an explanation to anyone; you are allowed to make decisions for your own life. If somebody asks you to do something and you want to say no, that's all you have to say: No. You don't have to say "No, because {insert reasons here}." Even if you've worked out the opportunity costs, or you don't have extra room in your schedule, you don't have to explain all of that! You do that work for YOU beforehand, but you just say NO when the request comes.

Most people aren't worth the time of the explanation, and they may not even react well to it in the first place, so don't bother giving it to them! You don't owe them a reason; it's your right to say no. It also keeps them from trying to use your explanation against you to try to get you to change your mind. There's no room for discussion here, the answer's just NO.

## SO JUST TO RECAP:

1. Get really clear on what you want for your business.
2. Say NO to anything that keeps you from that goal.

Remember - get a FREE worksheet to go with this episode, [right here](#).

*This mini-course was inspired by my Starship captains - the Starship is an online community of business owners who come together to share support and get ideas. It includes a private, online community of forums for asking questions and getting feedback, a weekly chat, live Q+A sessions with me every month, a full library of all of my classes, and the option to get paired up with an accountability partner (maybe someone who can help you remember to say NO!). If you'd like to learn more, visit [TaraSwiger.com/starshipbiz](https://TaraSwiger.com/starshipbiz)*