

# Positive Refusal Phrasing and Key Tips

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## All-around good options

- *I'm not comfortable with that (Pause...and see where the conversation goes).*
  - *I don't...I do...*
  - *I want to...I don't want...*
  - *I'm not going to...(option to add: what I CAN do is....)*
  - *I know that is not something I can flex to...*
- Say any of these calmly and definitively, with genuine kindness and respect.
  - Take a breath. Say the No, and pause.
  - The other person will likely say something first, and you can go from there!

Avoid Yes in a panic – You can always admit you're human and say: *"I can't answer that right now, let me find out and get back to you..."*(and make sure you follow up!)

## Empowering self (self-advocacy)

- *I have to tell you, I feel like...and I'd rather...*
- *I'm willing to...I can't promise to...*
- *I'll do it with help...[Or] and I need some resources and help*
- *I agree with you that..I do not believe/agree that....*
- *My answer to that right now is No. Here is where I am saying Yes.*

## Empowering others

- *I am not the best person for this, and I can help you find someone who is.*
- *I am not able to do that right now, however I know a person who might.*
- *Let me help you think of the best person for this.*
- *Is there anyone else who can take this on?*
- *What if I did X, and we involve someone else for Y.*

## You can clarify a request to help you decide yes or no

- *This is what I need to know...*
- *Help me understand...*
- *Why do you ask?*
- *What are you most concerned about with this?*
- *What is most important to you here?*



### **When you sense disagreement... consider exploring....**

- *What would it look like if we did that but changed this?*
- *That is not possible without serious repercussions. Can we agree that/on...?*
- *Thanks for pointing that out, I appreciate you sharing that with me. Now let's...*
- *I agree, xyz is critical. It's also important for....How can we make sure that happens?*
- *I can't do that. I'm happy to...would that be helpful?*

### **Making a No into a Yes with a superior at work:**

- *If we do that, then this over here will be impacted. What is more important to you?*
- *Who else can be involved to make this happen as you're requesting?*
- *I can't do that right this moment...I can do it at X.*
- *I would like to better understand [what you mean, the rationale, impact, concern, priorities, limitations, bigger picture, implications, consequences, etc.]*

### **When the conversation needs to end**

- *You sound upset right now. I'm going to end the conversation. I'd like to work together when you're ready.*
- *I find how you are speaking to me to be unacceptable. Now is not the time for this discussion.*
- *I'd rather not have this conversation now. I need some time to process.*
- *It might be better for our relationship if we don't talk about this.*

### **Avoid these Inflammatory words (passive aggressive):**

- *You don't know what you're talking about – OR -- You've GOT to be kidding*
- *You wouldn't understand – OR -- Just forget it*
- *That's just policy – OR -- It can't be done*
- *That won't work – OR -- You just don't get it*

### **Some fun ones for more troublesome times:**

- When someone says something offensive to you, pause and say with genuine curiosity, "Are you okay?"
- When you think someone is lying to you, say nothing, just look them in the eye, expressionless.
- Likewise, if someone is instigating an argument, say nothing. It's not an argument if you don't say anything.
- And last but not least, "I know you're not a total jerk, but I'm having trouble reconciling that with the way I feel in this conversation." 😊

Practice. Say one brave thing every day. Using "no" or "not" can be uncomfortable. It's okay!

