



Signposts:

No is not a four-letter word - getting over people-pleasing and into pleasing yourself.

By Pia Muggerud

When was the last time you really wanted to say no to someone, yet you somehow ended up agreeing and saying the opposite! Not only that, but then you resent yourself or the other for not going with your own truth.

My client Nancy came to me feeling completely exhausted and overworked. She was a working mother who took both roles very seriously; putting all her energy into being the best in both areas. She was finding it increasingly challenging to do both well.

When we started working together, Nancy said her main issue was her irritability that had not been an issue before. In the past, she had strongly believed that keeping cheerful around challenges, made finding a solution easier. Now she said she didn't seem to be able to contain her increasing irritation very well and it was becoming a major dilemma, not just for her but for the whole family.

We started exploring further as to where she thought this problem might have begun. When we looked deeper into the issue of her irritability, and after various exercises and conversations, Nancy admitted that she resented being the "yes-girl". By that, she explained that she found it almost impossible to say no to people. Even when she was clear when her answer to a request or demand was no, mostly her response would be yes. Digging deeper, Nancy realised this habit came from years of trying to please her mother.

Nancy had spent a lot of time beating herself up for how she was being, but as she slowly got more clarity on what it was costing her in her own integrity and feeling of self worth, she committed fully to move away from this destructive pattern. In the past, she had got the acknowledgement and love through pleasing others. And over the years, Nancy learned that saying yes, even when it was against her own needs, would get the approval that she needed.

When you make yourself a priority, when you become number one in your own life, it allows you to enjoy when you do say yes to others, because it is out of choice and not out of a sense of duty. By starting to truly take care of and get clear on what is important to you first, it will help you make choices and decisions that honour your own soul in everyday life.

From years of personal experience, as well as coaching great people, I have learned that when we care deeply for ourselves, we naturally begin to care for others - our families, our friends, and our greater global community... in a healthier and more effective way.

What did Nancy do to get back on track? Although she found it difficult and a bit of a strain in the beginning, when she applied herself consistently, the 5 following steps became simpler and simpler:

1. Nancy gave herself the permission to put herself first.
2. She started investing in herself and her own well-being.
3. She started asking for support from others.
4. She got clear about what was important to her and took action based on that.
5. She practiced saying no every day, no matter how hard she found it..

Nancy would practice first with the easy no's, like saying no to attend a lunch or declining a meeting with a friend when she was more inclined to spend some quality time with herself. Then she moved on to telling the children no when they insisted upon getting their own way or when they wanted to stay up past their bed time. Over time, not only did the kids start settling down more when they knew their limits, but Nancy noticed them enjoying a much happier mum in the house. Nancy's husband had supported her through the coaching process around this issue, and he was over the moon, when Nancy would say no to him; getting just how important this was to his wife.

Now, months later, Nancy admits that there are times when she is tempted to go back to her old habits, but through her own perseverance and commitment, reminds herself of what is important to her; and takes action towards that. Simply by saying no...

What can you do today to make the necessary changes your life needs? And how will start saying no more truthfully have an impact on your mood and general well-being? Start exploring today!

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