

Are you a Yes woman?

Special
Report

Identify the possible consequences and decide how you might manage them.

Some of us seem programmed to say the word yes to everything we are asked. 'Yes, I can give you a lift home. Yes, I can take on extra work. Yes, I'll come with you to the party.'

But sometimes it's important to decide what you really want — and how to stick to it.

Here are seven common mind traps — and how to avoid them.

The confusion trap

Saying yes when you really mean no. Saying yes to the needs of others can be so automatic, it's often only after you've agreed to something that you realise you don't want to do it.

The escape

Notice how you feel. When, for example, your friend asks you to come with her to a party and you feel tense or get a sinking feeling, be aware that these emotions are telling you that you don't want to go. Follow your feelings — and decline the invitation.

The pressure trap

Feeling you have to give

How to escape the mind traps

an answer immediately. You don't! But it's easy to feel pressured and forget that you have the right to consider it first.

The escape

Say you'll get back to them. If you're unsure, ask for more information or time to think about it or to discuss it with someone else. Your friend needs to know whether you can look after her children at the weekend. If she needs an immediate answer and you don't feel able to give her one, then gently suggest that she asks someone else.

The 'can't look bad' trap

Thinking you'll look mean or selfish if you say no. Putting yourself first now and again doesn't make you an unkind, uncaring person.

The escape

Acknowledge the other

person's situation but state your own needs. If a friend asks for a lift home for the third time in two weeks and it's not convenient, say so.

For example: 'You'll only have to wait 15 minutes for a bus but giving you a lift will make me stressed.'



Learn to say no

about being late picking up my son from nursery.'

The people-pleasing trap

Assuming that the other person will feel hurt and rejected if you say no. Thinking that someone

else's wellbeing is down to you saps your energy and stops them from taking responsibility for their own actions and feelings.

The escape

Let go of those emotions! Acknowledge the other person's feelings but let them take responsibility. Say: 'I know you'll be disappointed but I'm afraid you're going to have to ask someone else.'

The consequences trap

Thinking: 'If I don't do this, then something bad might happen!' It's easy to believe that saying no will result in the other person refusing to talk to you or to do something for you in the future.

But this fearful way of thinking means that others can take advantage of you.

The escape

Don't be a victim. Before you say no, first



The face-saving trap

I've said yes — I can't change my mind. You want to be seen as reliable but if you do something you really don't want to do, your reluctance and resentment will come across instead.

The escape

It's never too late to change your mind. Simply apologise, say you've changed your mind and explain why. 'I know I said I'd come out tonight but I've changed my mind — I'm too tired.'

The excuses trap

Giving several reasons why you're saying no. The more excuses you give, the less believable and more desperate you sound.

The escape

Accept that other people can see through your excuses. Recognise that you only need one genuine reason not to do something, and leave it at that.

Gill Hassan