

How to Say No Gratefully and Gracefully

Chapter 2: Career

Early on, I thought saying no was nuts. I wanted to help people, so yes, I would accept all offers. Plus I knew I needed the money, the reps, and the experience. But, as my career flourished, and new opportunities flooded in, I realized I'd have to start saying no. A lot. That's when I made the commitment to learn how to say no the right way, with grace and gratitude. Here's how I do it.

STEP ONE Express gratitude

Even if it's not the most exciting opportunity I've gotten, I still make a point to remember when no one cared about working with me. So the first thing I say is this:

Thank you so much for thinking about me. It means a lot that you shared this opportunity.

STEP TWO Show respect for their project

Just because I can't say yes to the project right now doesn't mean it's not a worthwhile endeavor. That's why I usually follow with something like:

Your project sounds really cool, and I'd love to help. However, I'm working on [this other thing] right now, and I have to stay 100 percent focused on it. The truth is, I'm intrigued by [your thing], and I'd love to get involved. But I don't think I have the capacity to give it the attention it deserves.

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STEP THREE

Come through for them

Step back for a moment and ask yourself why the person came to you in the first place. Do they need you specifically? Or do they need someone like you?

As much as I like to think I'm special, and no one else can fill my shoes, it's not true. If someone asks me to speak at an event, and there are twenty other speakers, they don't need me. They just need a speaker. Or if they ask for a quote in the New York Times, they don't need me. They need an expert to quote in an article. Whatever it is, I try to give them what they need:

However, I'd love to recommend my friend Brett. I'm not sure if he's available, but he'd be awesome for this project. If he doesn't work out, you might also try Krista or Geoff, they'd be great too.

Notice how, instead of burning a bridge by just saying no, I've built three or four. I've built a bridge to them by helping to solve their problem. And I've built bridges to Brett, Krista, and Geoff because they're going to find out I recommended them for an event or an interview or a project they wouldn't otherwise have had a chance to do.

STEP FOUR

Keep the door open

In closing, I say something like this:

I'm really grateful you thought about me for this opportunity. I want you to know I never take things like this lightly. If something similar comes up again, don't hesitate to reach out. I can't promise I'll be able to do it, but I'm a pretty connected guy, and I can probably help you find the help you need.

These activities and worksheets are taken from the book **Change Maker**: Turn your passion for health and fitness into a powerful purpose and a wildly successful career by John Berardi, PhD.

Check it out at: www.changemakeracademy.com/book