

20 Ways to Say No

By Ramona Creel

I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF SEVERAL PROJECTS

- ☐ let people know when you have accepted other responsibilities
- ☐ no need to make excuses if you don't have any free time
- ☐ no one will fault you for having already filled your plate

I AM NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THAT

- ☐ you might be uncomfortable with any of a number of issues
- ☐ the people involved, the type of work, the morale implications, etc.
- ☐ this is a very respectful way to avoid a sticky situation

I AM NOT TAKING ON ANY NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

- ☐ you aren't saying that you will never help out again
- ☐ just that you feel your schedule is as full as you would like now
- ☐ understanding your limits is a talent to be expected

I AM NOT THE MOST QUALIFIED PERSON FOR THE JOB

- ☐ if you don't feel that you have adequate skills, that's okay
- ☐ it's better to admit your limitations up front
- ☐ the best way to avoid feeling overwhelmed down the road

I DO NOT ENJOY THAT KIND OF WORK

- ☐ life isn't about drudgery -- if you don't enjoy it, why do it?
- ☐ don't be afraid to let someone know you just don't want to
- ☐ someone else is bound to enjoy the work you don't

I DO NOT HAVE ANY MORE ROOM IN MY CALENDAR

- ☐ be honest if your schedule is filled
- ☐ "filled" doesn't have to mean really filled
- ☐ know when you are scheduled as much as you are willing and stop

I HATE TO SPLIT MY ATTENTION AMONG PROJECTS

- ☐ let people know that you want to do a good job for them
- ☐ but you can't when your focus is too divided or splintered
- ☐ you will be more effective if you focus on one project at a time

I HAVE ANOTHER COMMITMENT

- ☐ it doesn't matter what the commitment is
- ☐ it can even simply be time to yourself or with friends or family
- ☐ you don't have to justify -- you simply aren't available

I HAVE NO EXPERIENCE WITH THAT

- ☐ volunteering shouldn't mean learning an entirely new set of skills
- ☐ suggest that they find someone who has experience in that area
- ☐ offer to help out with something that you already know how to do

I KNOW YOU WILL DO A WONDERFUL JOB YOURSELF

- ☐ people often ask for help because they doubt their own abilities
- ☐ let them know that you have confidence they will succeed
- ☐ you are actually doing them a favor in the long run

I NEED TO FOCUS MORE ON MY PERSONAL LIFE

- ☐ don't be ashamed of wanting to spend time with your family
- ☐ having a strong family is an important priority in and of itself
- ☐ be willing to put your personal needs first

I NEED TO FOCUS ON MY CAREER RIGHT NOW

- ☐ often, you have to focus your energies on a work-related task
- ☐ you may have to give up some civic or community duties
- ☐ if you don't do it, someone else will take on the task

I NEED TO LEAVE SOME FREE TIME FOR MYSELF

- ☐ it's okay to be selfish -- in a good way!
- ☐ treat your personal time like any other appointment
- ☐ block off time in your calendar and guard it with your life

I WOULD RATHER DECLINE THAN DO A MEDIOCRE JOB

- ☐ know when you aren't going to be able to deliver a quality product
- ☐ the reason doesn't matter -- not enough time, wrong skills, etc.
- ☐ whatever the reason is enough for turning a request down

I WOULD RATHER HELP OUT WITH ANOTHER TASK

- ☐ saying no doesn't mean that you can't help at all

- ☐ if someone asks you to do something you really despise, refuse
- ☐ then offer to help with something you find more enjoyable

LET ME HOOK YOU UP WITH SOMEONE WHO CAN DO IT

- ☐ if you aren't available to help out, offer another qualified resource
- ☐ helping to connect people is a valuable service to offer
- ☐ make sure the person you refer will represent you well

NO

- ☐ sometimes it's okay to just say no!
- ☐ just say it in a way that expresses respect and courtesy
- ☐ leave the door open for good relations

NOT RIGHT NOW, BUT I CAN DO IT LATER

- ☐ if you really want to help but don't have time, say so
- ☐ offer to help at a later time or date
- ☐ if they can't wait for you, they'll find someone else

SOME THINGS HAVE COME UP THAT NEED MY ATTENTION

- ☐ unexpected things happen that throw your schedule off
- ☐ accept that you may need to make a few adjustments
- ☐ it is temporary and you will have more time when life stabilizes

THIS REALLY IS NOT MY STRONG SUIT

- ☐ it's okay to admit your limitations
- ☐ knowing what you can handle and what you can't is a skill
- ☐ your time will be more efficiently spent on something you do well