

20+ Ways to Say No Without Guilt

Sometimes you have to say no, and not just when you can't do the thing being asked of you.

Even when you do have the money to borrow, the time to give, or the energy to use, you need to say no if you really don't want to do it, or if by saying yes, you have to say no to something which is important or a priority to you.

Saying no in these circumstances doesn't make you selfish - it makes you strong.

Protecting your time, energy and peace is necessary for emotional wellness.

Phrases you can use whenever you need a kind but firm way to say no:

Simple and polite:

"I appreciate you thinking of me, but I'm not in a position to right now."

"Thank you for asking, but I'm gonna have to pass this time."

"Unfortunately, I am not in a position to right now"

"That doesn't work for me, so will have to pass, but I really hope it goes well."

When you need space:

"I need to put my energy into other priorities right now."

"I can't commit to this, but I hope you understand."

"I've got other things I need to focus on, so I can't."

"This isn't the right time for me."

Gentle but firm:

"I can't help this time"

"I need to protect my time, so I have to say no."

"That's Just not something I can take on (at this time)."

"No, but thank you for asking."

"I'm not able to, but I wish you success."

No with alternatives:

"I can't do that, but maybe [someone else] could help."

"I don't have the time, but here's a resource that might help."

"I can't commit fully, but I can support in a smaller way."

"I can't join, but please keep me in mind next time."

"I'm not available, but you could try reaching out to [name/resource]."

Short & Straightforward:

"No, thank you."

"I'm not available."

"Sorry, I can't."

"Not this time."

"That won't work for me."

Saying no is a skill, and like any skill it gets easier with practice. Each time you choose a response that honours your needs you reinforce healthy boundaries and protect your emotional wellbeing.