

[The Art of Saying No](#)  
Tessa Davis of [Don't Forget the Bubbles](#)

Transcript

I used to find it really hard to say no to people when they asked me to be part of a new project, to take on an extra teaching session or even just to go to social events that I did not want to go to. I could not bring myself to say no and there's so many reasons for this. I want to keep people happy I also have huge "FOMO" (fear of missing out) that "say no to this opportunity I'm going to miss something really cool" and also it's just really awkward to say no. so I didn't. but what I found was, I was getting overwhelmed by tasks so by taking on all of these things I was doing less well at the tasks I had initially and I was becoming less productive. I knew that something had to change and so I taught myself how to say no without feeling guilty and you can too by following these five simple steps.

Step one: **Be Prepared** by this I mean have some rules in mind and some boundaries in your head so you know when that time is coming, when you're going to have to say no. for example I might decide I can commit to 4 conference presentations a year and once I've accepted these, I know that the next time an invitation comes in I'm going to have to say no. This just means that you're more mentally ready when the time comes.

Step two: **Keep it Simple** and be clear. it's easy to want to give a long explanation as to why you're saying no to make yourself feel better. it's okay to give some explanation but what you don't want is to leave it open so that they can come back to you and help try to solve your problem. so rather than saying "I'm really sorry but I've just got too many things on in the next few weeks and I don't think I can fit this in" it would be clearer just to say "I've got multiple projects in the next few weeks and if I take this on, my work is going to suffer so I'm going to have to say no" it's just clearer but you're keeping it simple and not too lazy.

Step three: **Be Nice** you are saying no and they're going to be disappointed. there's no reason that you can't still be nice and kind about it. so make sure when you reply you're not being too short and add in some nice phrases "thanks so much for thinking of me", "I'm really honoured that you considered inviting me" or "that sounds like a really cool event but unfortunately, I'm not going to be able to join." it just helps add a sense of positivity to it to hopefully take the edge off your rejection.

Step four: **Don't Burn Bridges** you might want the opportunity to work with this person again or work on similar projects and if that's the case make that clear so when you're replying you can say "I'm sorry I can't do it this time but please keep me in mind for future" or "ask me again next time this comes around." another opportunity here is to recommend one of your colleagues so "I'm sorry I can't do it this time but have you considered asking X? she did a great job" it might be an opportunity for one of your colleagues that is excellent and that they would love to do it. so think about who in your network might be able to use this, it will be a win-win for all three of you.

Step five: **No Regrets** you need to be able to move forward and put this behind you once you said "no" don't spend ages dwelling on it or feeling guilty about it. think of the positives. you have said no because you want to focus on another project which is great or you've said

no because you want to spend more time with your family or do something for yourself. all of these are great reasons. they're positive for your life. focus on that and move on. I follow these five steps every time. I now have mastered the art of saying no without feeling guilty and you can too.