



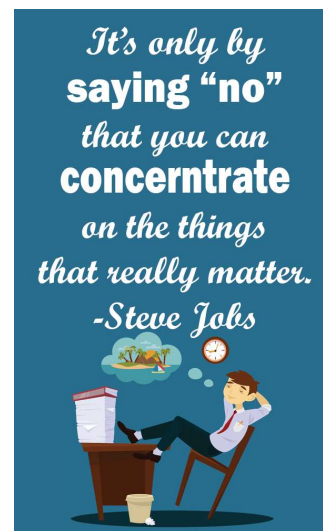
Helping Leaders, Individuals and Teams  
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**September –  
 New Beginnings vs. Overcommitment  
 Learn to Say NO!**



**Ahh September!**



It's the month of a new school year. No matter how old you get, there's something about September that still smacks of a new beginning. The season is changing, summer is coming to an end, the kids are back in school, the summer workers are back in college, school buses are on the road – the signs are all over.

September can give us all a sense of a new beginning and the opportunity to regroup. The focus at work often

strengthens as everyone is pretty much back from vacation and we're collectively more focused. So have you thought about those goals you created back at the beginning of the year? Yes those. Drag them out from whatever pile they are hiding under, dust them off and take a look. Did you create benchmarks for them and if so, are you close to hitting your third-quarter benchmark?

If you didn't create goals, you have a new opportunity to decide what you'd like to accomplish or where you'd like to be by year-end.

It's a good time to take a step back, reassess your goals and your progress and adjust your plan for the last few months of the year. **It will give you a fresh sense of purpose, energy and motivation!**

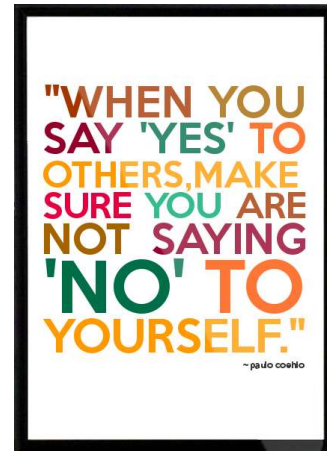
So, that's the new beginning part. What about the overcommitment part?

Well, with new beginnings also come new demands – from all the activities of your children who are back in school - sports, band, musicals, and the requests from various groups requesting parent and community involvement and support. Organizations outside of schools are also asking for help with fundraising, festivals, and if you live in Vermont like I do, Chicken Pie Suppers!

And as others at work begin to refocus their goals too, they may have more requests for your help and involvement.

So, let's talk about how well you are able to say no, if at all. The first step is understanding your priorities. What do you want to take on, for the right reasons, and to what do you want to say no?

Saying no can be easy for some folks, but for others, it can be really difficult and if you are one of them, you can end up way overcommitted. All sense of balance in your life goes out the window and chaos ensues.



**When you say yes to one person, to whom are you saying no? Are you saying no to yourself?**

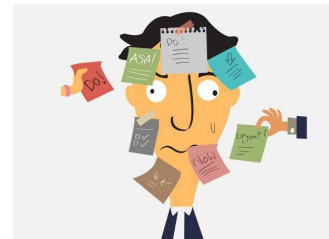
- Your sleep
- Your exercise
- Preparing healthy meals
- Accomplishing your goals
- Meditation/Prayer

**Are you saying no to others who may be more important?**

- Helping your children
- Caring for family members
- Your significant other
- Friends

## What happens when you say YES when you wanted to say NO? Here are a few of the results I've seen people experience:

1. Negative emotions build up inside – anger and frustration being at the top of the list
2. Exhaustion sets in because of being run ragged
3. There's a tendency to put less effort into the job or activity because you don't really want to do it
4. Then you feel guilty for not giving it your all
5. Self-respect dwindles as you kick yourself for not being able to say no



## Saying NO Means Knowing Your Limits

## There are also a couple negative results to saying no that's I've seen:

1. People often feel a sense of false guilt because they said no – it's FALSE guilt! – remember, most of the things people are asking you to help with are good things, but that doesn't mean that you have to do everything on this earth that is worthwhile. Think of that in the extreme. You can't be responsible for everything – that's absurd.
2. Sometimes folks experience coercion or even a little hostility from others – particularly if they're used to you always saying yes.

"Overcommitment is what happens when your enthusiasm for life collides with the reality of your calendar."

- rachel schultz,  
manage motherhood

## So here are some TIPS FOR SAYING NO!

First, think about your time as a limited resource. If you were a philanthropist, and maybe you are, you still have a finite amount of money to give. How would you choose which organizations or causes you would give to? Maybe you would give a little to all of them. Or maybe you would choose the ones for which you have the most connection or the ones upon which you place the most value so you can focus your money where you believe it can do the most good. I saw a TV segment several years ago about Bill Gates providing classes for wealthy people who



## But I can't say no to my boss!

You can, if you do it the right way and for the right reason, one that will resonate with the boss.

Explain to your boss that by taking on too many commitments, you are weakening your productivity and jeopardizing your current

wanted to give away money – teaching them how to be diligent in checking out organizations and finding out how their money would actually be used and what the impact would actually be before they committed to give.

It's the same with your time. Think about your time as a resource and how you want to target it for the most value and impact. You can't give your time to every request and when you do, it waters down your impact.

### Now for a few techniques to actually say **NO**:

1. Just say no. The longer you talk, the more likely you are to say yes.
2. You don't have to give a reason if you don't want to.
3. If you do want to give a reason, be honest and direct. "Thank you for asking me, but I have already made other commitments", "I have too much on my plate right and would not be able to do what you need" or "Honestly, while I respect your commitment to it, that's not a priority for me and I am committed to other things right now.", etc. And you don't need to apologize!
4. Don't be defensive. (I'm sorry, I know I should help, if I weren't so busy, etc.) It gives the other person the opportunity to debate with you and make you feel guilty. ("You can do it, come on, we really need you, we're all busy, you know what they say about asking a busy person") – you can hear it now, right?
5. Suggest alternatives – "I can't do it this month, but I could help you next month"; "I can't commit to X, but I would be willing to help with Y". "I can't help you but I have a friend who might be willing. I'll talk with her." Never suggest someone else without first asking the person.

And here's one of my best techniques, tell them you need to check your calendar first and you'll get back to them.

That gives you a chance to look and see what commitments you've already made and get some

commitments. Be prepared with data to back up what you're saying. Such data could include a list of projects, deadlines, numbers about how your work load has increased, etc.

If he/she still pushes, ask them how they want you to prioritize your commitments. Ask what's most important.

Ask if deadlines can be pushed back. Help the boss see your dilemma.

If you are truly overcommitted or the new request from the boss or another team member will make it impossible to meet deadlines and commitments on other projects, then it's important for the boss to have that information to make a proper assessment about the work and to help with solutions.



perspective about what your calendar really looks like. It also gives you the opportunity to think about it and not feel the immediate pressure of the request.

So here's to a new beginning, a beautiful fall season and enjoying the balance that brings great pleasure in what you do!

Enjoy your new beginning,



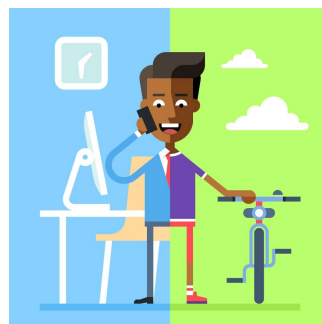
Take your career to a new level. Contact me!



I don't say no because I am so busy.

It's because I don't want to be so busy.

## Find Your Balance



## Upcoming Newsletters

### October

Don't Wait Until They're Gone!  
- They Might Need to Know Now

### November

Google's Biggest Secret's to Team Effectiveness: How do YOU Create Psychological Safety?

### December

Leaders – Give Your Direct Reports the Gift of Helping Them Grow



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