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The Magic of Yes

Skills and Professional Development



In September's column, I wrote about why it's important to learn to say no to things that don't further your goals. We have limited resources to use every day, including time; therefore, it is important to maximize those resources by using them strategically.

So, when should we say yes? The simple answer is to say yes when it moves you toward your goals, as long as doing so aligns with your values and priorities.

We have to be careful because there will be opportunities to make choices that get us what we want. But to do so when it's illegal or unethical negates our march toward that goal. Saying yes should not land us in jail or provoke a guilty conscience.

That doesn't mean that the choices presented to us will necessarily be easy ones; sometimes it's a matter of degrees. If we are presented with choices that are extremely difficult but align with our priorities and values, there is nothing wrong with exploring whether or how to say yes.

Another time we should consider saying yes is when we are faced with fear. Fear is an opportunity to think through the consequences and to prepare. Once we've done that, fear should not keep us from putting our best foot forward. What others think of us or our own self-created thoughts of inadequacy need to be eliminated from our decision-making processes. A person who isn't afraid of what others think gets to do a lot more dancing.

To some people, the letters in the word "fear" stand for "false evidence appearing real." In other words, we often create a story or narrative that has no bearing or basis in fact, and that fear keeps us from moving forward.

This is a perfect time to say yes and take action anyway. There are tools available to help us do that, like Mel Robbins' Five Second Rule, which states that you should act on a goal within five seconds of the impulse. However, I want to focus on why you should say yes.

Once we've established that the options are viable (that is, it will propel us toward the future we desire), it is not necessarily the case that we will say yes easily and with excitement, but here are four reasons we should.

1. **To learn something new** — Sir Richard Branson said, "If someone offers you an amazing opportunity to do something and you're not sure you can do it, say yes. Then learn how to do it later." Life is about growing and learning, and when we are given the opportunity to learn a new skill or increase our knowledge, we should take it. More than likely what we learn can be used in the future, but even if that is not the case, learning helps keep us healthy because new neural pathways are developed, we become more interesting, and it helps us to better adapt to change.
2. **More open doors** — Opportunities are everywhere. We simply need to open our eyes to them. But it's not just our eyes. We have to be mentally open to those possibilities as well. When we take on opportunities and challenges, we are presented with more opportunities and challenges. By saying yes, we signal that we are willing to walk through the door of opportunity and welcome more of what opportunity brings us.
3. **Soaring confidence** — Here's a funny paradox. Confidence is a mindset, but it is not really created in the mind. Confidence comes from doing. The more we do, the more we know we can do, and that is what we call confidence. When we say yes, even to things we are not yet capable of doing, and then we do it, we build our confidence, which then gives us the mindset to take on more.
4. **They really like us** — Saying yes is not about being a people pleaser, but when we say yes, we do please people. When we say yes, we tell the world that we are positive and agreeable. Be cautious though: While there may be times when we do something for others that we don't want to do, we need to be intentional with our explanation and not do it just to please someone.

You can no doubt come up with dozens of other reasons to say yes. But if there is no reason to say no and inside of you is any inkling that you should say yes, put your fear aside and just say, "Yes!"

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