

You have to know when to say no.

One of the big problems faced by people who are busy is knowing how to say no. I've heard a saying invoked on many occasions: if you want something done then ask a busy person to do it. The problem is that if you are a busy person it is often hard to say no.

Perhaps this stems from our childhoods when saying no was something to be punished. Do you remember, as a child, being asked to tidy your room? I still have young children and they really know how to say no when there is an unpleasant job to be done.

I'm going to save my tips on how to deal with an unpleasant job you have to do for another time but for now we are going to look at those times you end up "volunteering" to do something because you couldn't say no.

The first thing to note (and this is important to remember every time someone asks you to do something) is that you can't do a good job on something if you are not motivated to do it. It is possible to get motivated for unpleasant jobs but this requires a great deal of effort on your part, will take time and energy away from other things, and will result on a not very well done job.

This brings me to my next point to remember. EVERY JOB you choose to do TAKES YOUR TIME to do it. Of course time is your most precious commodity and, just like your money, everyone you know has a good idea of how you should be spending it. If you don't choose how it is spent then others will decide for you. Every time you say yes to a job you did not want to do you are saying yes to using your time on that job. But it gets even worse because if its a job you don't want to do it will take you longer to do than normal.

The next time you say you want more time remember that you may well be doing things that you should have said no to.

Don't get me wrong here! Some times we do jobs we don't want to do because we can see there is a bigger pay-off. Building strong relationships often means volunteering to do things that you would not choose to do normally. The same goes for serving the community etc.

However – and this is my last and most important point: how can you ever hope to say no if you don't know what you want to say yes to?

Think about this for a moment. The way to say no is to discover what you want to say yes to. If you want to improve your relationship with a spouse or partner and you have booked to go to the restaurant with them then you know that you must say no to the invitation to go to the pub with your work colleagues. If you know that you want to excel at what you do then you know that you must say no when a work colleague asks you to join them on another committee. You suddenly know that you can't afford all that time in pointless committees etc.

If you want to say NO more often then take some time to discover what you want to say YES to.