

Honor Authenticity

"Lantern Stance" Phrases:

Say "no" and make it a complete sentence. If there is a need for a justification, make sure it's not defensive or aggressive (i.e. I'd like to help, but I am not prepared today; Thanks for considering me, but I'm not available; Sounds like a great time, but I've committed to something else.)

Here Are 7 Sneaky Ways To Say "No" Without Offending Anyone:

1. "This sounds interesting, but I have too much on my plate at the moment." When you start your disagreement with a compliment: "this sounds interesting", it makes the person less defensive and gives you a valid reason to decline "I have too much on my plate at the moment".
2. "I'm sorry but last time I did ___, I had a negative experience." Example: Before I would say that I was a vegetarian, but for some reason this explanation has never worked on hospitable Italian grandmothers. They would try to feed me bacon, sausage and octopuses (yuck!) explaining it with "this is not meat" or "I just put a little in this dish". Now I simply say, "I'm sorry, but I can not eat meat. Last time I did, I had a terrible headache." And it works like a charm, because no one wants to hurt you on purpose. The focus here is not on what you want or do not want to do, but on your previous bad experience.
3. "I'd love to do this, but ___" This is a great way of saying that you like the idea, you are willing to help, but you just can not do it at the moment. Note: Just do not go into a lengthy justification of why you can not do it. First, it is not necessary. Time is a limited resource and when you say "yes" to one task, you have to say "no" to other opportunities that might be more important, urgent and beneficial to you at the moment. Second, offering a lengthy explanation makes you sound guilty and unsure, so people might push further to see if you will agree.
4. "I'm not the best person to help on this. Why don't you try X?" If you feel that you can not contribute much to the task, have no time or lack the resources, do not beat around the bush! Let the person know it up front. This, however, does not mean that you can not be helpful. You can still refer the person to a lead they can follow up on.
5. "I can't do this, but I can do ___ (lesser commitment)." This is another variation of the previous method. You are saying "No" to a request, but you are still offering your help on your own terms, choosing the easier, less time-consuming commitment.
6. "You look great, but ___ does not do you justice" This is a great way to diplomatically express your opinion when someone asks you a question about their appearance, without hurting the other person's feelings (especially if the person asking you is your friend, your superior or your spouse).
7. "That sounds great, but I just can't put one more thing on my calendar for the next few weeks. Let me call you ___ (specific time range)." Sometimes you might get a proposal, an idea or a request that sounds interesting. But considering the amount of tasks on your to-do list, you do not feel like taking another commitment just yet. In this case, instead of saying a straight out "No", you are giving yourself time to reflect before making a final decision: "Let me call you ___ (specific time range)." However, if you are not interested, do not leave the person hanging on. Use other ways to say "No" that are more definitive (e.g. methods #1, #2 or #3). It is more disappointing when the person is counting on you and you let them down.