

## WELLNESS TIPS

### SELF-CARE THROUGH SAYING “NO”

If you would describe yourself as a people pleaser, with difficulty saying “no”, it is easy to become overextended or feel annoyed or resentful from agreeing to take on more than feels comfortably manageable.

With the beginning of the semester approaching, both new and returning CCOM students have a wide range of volunteer opportunities in which you can become involved and there will be many social gatherings to choose from.

Many people have developed a belief that one should be agree to requests made of them because the other person might become angry or disappointed, think negatively about you, or consider you selfish if the request is refused. This dilemma may occur when friends or family make requests, or perhaps when other students or organizations to which you belong do so.

It’s important to pay attention to your own needs and goals in considering if you agree to requests that are made of you. Taking on too much takes time and can impede your productivity in your other activities, obligations, or priorities.

#### Tips for saying “No”

##### Value Your Time and Current Commitments

How would you like use your limited available time? Pick and choose what you say “yes” to.

This may be especially important at the beginning of the semester, when you might not be quite sure how much time you have for various extra activities.

##### Know what your priorities are

What is interesting or important to you?

You don’t have to justify your priorities to satisfy others.

##### Be Direct

Be polite, tactful, but firm if you decide to decline a request. You don’t have to apologize or have a reason that the other person agrees with or is persuaded by.

If the person keeps repeating the request, just keep repeating the same refusal (this is called the broken record technique).

In some instances, it might make sense to give an explanation. But in general, keep your response brief. You don't have to elaborate - the more detailed explanation you give, the more you allow the person making the request to find a way around your reason and keep challenging your response.

### Take Your Time

If it's difficult to decline a request in person, say you need time to check your schedule and you will get back to them. You might choose to respond by e-mail or text if that is more comfortable than responding in person.

### Pay Attention to Your Thinking

Challenge thoughts that you "should" say yes.

Challenge thoughts associated with feelings of guilt

Challenge thoughts that are highly self-critical.

### Sometimes Requests Seem Worthwhile and You Would Like to Leave the Door Open

If you would like to be considered in the future, let the other person know. Sometimes it's the timing of the request and not the request itself or it's just not a good fit for you at that time.

If you want to say "no" to the specific request, but want to maintain the relationship, you might offer an alternative to the request.

Has it become too easy for others to make requests because you habitually say "yes"? This might result in requests being made of you even more frequently, resulting in taking on more than is in your best interests. Saying "yes" when it's against your desires, goals or time constraints adds stress and takes time and attention away from your priorities.

Most people will accept your refusal of their request. If someone doesn't, consider if they are being respectful of you and your decision. In personal relationships, do requests of each other feel mutual, respected, and balanced?

Lifehack. "How to Say No When You Say Yes Too Often." Danielle Droitsch.. July 8, 2020

<https://www.lifehack.org/620458/how-to-say-no>

Verywellmind. "Say No to People Making Demands on Your Time." Elizabeth Scott. April 9, 2020

<https://www.verywellmind.com/say-no-to-people-making-demands-on-your-time-3145025>

Psych Central. "Learning To Say No." Jane Collingwood. October 8, 2018

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/learning-to-say-no/>

The Power of a Positive No: Save the Deal Save the Relationship and Still Say No (Book), William Ury, 2007.

Questions? Concerns? Feel free to contact the MSCC counselors.

**Medical Student Counseling Center** [osac-mscc@uiowa.edu](mailto:osac-mscc@uiowa.edu) 319-335-8056 1240

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Stay safe and stay healthy!

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If you would like to review previous Wellness Tips, go to the CCOM Medical Student Counseling Center Website: <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>