



EPISODE NO. 381

# The Power of No

SCHOOL OF SELF-IMAGE

We are going to start this episode out with two powerful quotes. One is by Steve Jobs where he said, "People think focusing is about saying yes to the thing you've got to focus on, but that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. I'm actually as proud of the things that we haven't done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to a thousand things." And then Paulo Coelho said, "When you say yes to others, make sure you're not saying no to yourself." Let's dive into the power of no.

Welcome to the School of Self-Image, where personal development meets style. Here's your hostess, Master Life Coach, Tonya Leigh.

Hello, beautiful friends. How are you doing? I have had the most fabulous month, and let me tell you why. I have had friends come into town almost every weekend for the past four weeks, and it's really interesting. When they called me up or sent me a text and said, "Hey, I want to come and see you," I noticed how their request felt in my body and for all of these friends, it was a huge yes. Everything in my body was like, "Come see me." It was just joy and delight. But has it ever happened where someone requested to have lunch or come and visit and your body is like, "No, please don't come. I don't want to see you. I don't want to spend time with you," And yet you still say yes to it? I know it certainly has happened to me. And that's why today we're going to dive into a powerful yet often neglected topic, which is the art of saying no, and more

importantly, the power of saying no. Because we all face situations where saying yes feels easier, even when our gut screams otherwise.

Whether it's a social commitment or work request or even the allure of just one more of something, constantly saying yes can leave us feeling drained, it can leave us feeling overwhelmed, it can leave us feeling cluttered, and ultimately, out of control of our own lives. So in this episode, I want to talk about the power of no and explore why we struggle with saying it and how to leverage it to create a life that truly aligns with our values and our priorities. And this episode is so good. I did something for you all. I created a whole guide to support this episode. It's something that I want you to practice. If you're someone that struggles with no, it's really uncomfortable for you, you fear what is going to happen if you say no, you want to download this guide. It's absolutely free and it's packed full of powerful questions that you can ask yourself before you respond with a yes or no, as well as ways to say no with assertiveness and yet kindness. So you can go to [schoolofselfimage.com](https://schoolofselfimage.com) forward slash power and get this guide.

So why do we say yes when we really want to say no? Because let's face it, saying no can be uncomfortable, and that's the reason why so many of us don't say it often. We fear disappointing others, we fear coming across as rude, or sometimes we say yes because we have FOMO. We just fear missing out on potential opportunities. And then I find with women especially, societal pressures and the way we have been conditioned, we are raised to believe that we need to be helpful and agreeable all of the time, and so that can further fuel our hesitation to use a simple two-letter word. And then as I was just mentioning, FOMO is a big reason why some of us say yes to things, we are afraid of missing out. If I don't say yes to this opportunity or to this invite, what am I missing out on? And instead, we need to be asking ourselves, what are we gaining?

FOMO is something that I used to struggle with a lot. I am a seven on the Enneagram, the enthusiast, and if I'm not careful, I'm always running to the next thing because I'm like, "Oh, this will be better, that'll be better," And so afraid of missing out. But because of the work that I've done, I can honestly say that I don't have FOMO any longer. I can hear about the best parties going on, and I can even hear about friends going to those parties, I don't care anymore because I'm just enjoying where I am. But I will tell you, FOMO will keep you saying yes and it'll keep you exhausted and not really feeling fulfilled. You're just running from one thing to the next full of fear because think about it, what does FOMO stand for? Fear of missing out. So no matter where you go and what you say yes to, the fear is still there.

We also might find ourselves people-pleasing, prioritizing others' needs over our own even at the expense of our own. So the way I like to think about no is this, imagine a jar that represents your time and your energy. Now, picture filling it with large rocks. Now, these large rocks are what you're saying yes to most of the time. And if you're saying yes to things that don't fulfill you, that drain you, that doesn't light you up, there's not a lot of room left in that jar for the other things. So it's like we flipped it, right? Because what's really important to you then becomes the little pebbles and the sand, and there's not a lot of room when you've stacked this jar with so many rocks of yeses that don't really matter to you. There's simply no room left for what's important to you.

So let's just look at the negative effects of not saying no. First of all, you get run all over. People just expect you to say yes to everything. And if you keep doing it, they're going to keep asking. If you don't have boundaries up, people will constantly just step over these boundaries that you never put in place in the first place. And so then you find yourself exhausted, overwhelmed, stretched thin, and probably burnt out. A lot of times when I'm coaching women and they're telling me that they're burnt out, they're overwhelmed. It's simply because they haven't had the courage to say no. They're so afraid of missing out, they're so afraid of hurting someone, they're so afraid of people being upset that they keep saying yes to things that are draining them. And so they're trying to get out of the problem without hurting others, without addressing the fear, and you simply can't do it.

Listen, I am preaching to myself over here because it's like I didn't want to say no to people, and yet I didn't want to feel the discomfort of saying no. It's like you have to choose one or the other. And so for me, I finally had to have the courage to allow people to be upset, to not like me, to be mad with me. But then I started to experience the liberation of that, of getting my life back, my time back, my energy back, and then I was like, I'm hooked. No is my new favorite word. So then you have the constant influx of external commitments and it can begin to cloud our sense of our purpose and what we truly want, and it can even begin to cloud our identity. We lose ourselves because we're living for everyone else. And so we begin to wonder like, who am I? I forgot because it's hidden beneath a pile of yeses.

This is work that I have been doing for many years, but I kicked this work into overdrive last year because I realized that I was still saying yes to things that were not aligned, and that weren't a good fit. And I've learned some really powerful lessons from saying no. One of them is saying no to a request does not mean that you're rejecting the person requesting it. And this is really big because I think when we are asked

something, "Hey, do you want to come to the party? Can you meet for dinner?" And we say no, we interpret it as I'm rejecting that person, but you're not. You're just rejecting the request but not the person asking it. You can politely decline while expressing so much appreciation for the invitation. And listen, in the guide that I am including for this episode, I have suggestions on how to say no. Again, you can grab that by going to [schoolofselfimage.com/Power](https://schoolofselfimage.com/Power).

Another lesson that I've learned from saying no is that saying yes to everything makes you a master of nothing. This is about focusing on quality over quantity. Would you rather have a hundred meh dinners or three or four amazing ones? Would you rather try to learn a hundred new things or really focus on doing a few things really, really well? And this is one of the reasons why I encourage School of Self-Image members to only focus on one extraordinary goal instead of saying yes to a hundred goals. So many women have said to me, "I have so many goals, it's overwhelming, and I end up doing nothing," And I suggest to them, "Well, why don't we just pick one? One that excites you, one that will grow you, one that will lead you in the direction that you want to go and give that one goal the majority of your energy and your time." And year after year, I see women hitting these extraordinary goals because they've said no to the other goals for now and really focused on one.

And it's uncomfortable because we're afraid of missing out. But if I just choose this one goal, what about all of these other ones? What about them? They're not getting done anyway. You feel scattered. You're not taking action on them because you have so many that it's overwhelming, so let's just choose one. So this is about quality over quantity. The other lesson that I've learned is that when you say yes to everything, you live someone else's life. I'm going to say that one again. When you say yes to everything, you live someone else's life because you are saying yes to their requests, their demands, and what they want. Does it align with what you want? Does it align with the life that you want to live? Does it align with your values? And again, if you need help figuring out is this a yes or a no, in the guide that I've created, The Guide to Saying No, I have a yes filter that you can run everything through to help you figure out, is this a yes or is it a no?

The other thing that I've learned is that every no is a yes to something else, and this is a part that we often forget. We are so afraid of the downside of saying no, that we don't spend time really thinking about what is the upside. If I say no to this request, if I say no to this invitation or opportunity, what is it then allowing for me? Maybe it's more time, maybe it's better opportunities, maybe it's more money, maybe it's more quality

friends in your life. So remember, every time you say no, as uncomfortable as it is, focus on the delight of what you are saying yes to.

Another lesson that I've learned is that saying no is about setting boundaries and taking back control of your life. Again, when I'm coaching women and they're telling me that they feel out of control, they feel like they are exhausted, then they're overwhelmed, a lot of times it's because they don't have boundaries and they are being run over. Their schedule feels out of control, their life feels out of control simply because they're not using the word no often enough. But when you begin to say no, it's you saying to the world, and this is another lesson, but I am a woman who is strong and respects myself. I prioritize my well-being to demonstrate that I am worthy and I am confident in who I am. So saying no does something powerful to your self-image. You begin to see yourself as strong, confident, and worthy. Because you know, again, every no is a yes to something else that's better aligned for you.

Think about it this way, saying yes to everything is a sign of weakness. And I hate to say that, but it's the truth. I think about all those years where I was saying yes to everything. It's because there was weakness. I was afraid. I was afraid of taking a stand for myself. I was afraid of losing people. I was afraid of being abandoned. I was afraid of missing out. It was such a fear-based response, and it was because I didn't have the courage to feel the discomfort of saying no. And the moment I began to say no more and more and more, I started to feel strong. I started to feel powerful. I started to feel worthy of my own love, and my own self-respect. And the way self-image works is that you will always prove yourself true and the world will mirror back to you how you see yourself. And so as I begin to elevate my self-image by using the word no, it's crazy the things that have happened outside of me, the types of people I've attracted, the opportunities, and a lot of it started with me saying no.

No, to the rude people, no to the requests, no to the junk food. And all of that began to change how I saw myself. The other lesson that I've learned is that saying no is not easy, but it is necessary if you want to live a truly amazing life. Also, saying no creates space for what truly matters. Remember the jar metaphor? When you focus on what truly matters first, those big rocks, there's not a lot of space. In fact, when you focus on your values, your top priorities, no has to be a part of that equation because you're going to look at your calendar and you're going to realize, I don't have space for this. It's not a priority. I've already scheduled what's important. I'm focused on what's important, so there is no space. And so the no's become very easy. It's like, "No, thank you. I can't go to the party because I'm really focused on my health and well-being, and

I don't want to wake up feeling hangover. I don't want to be out all night. It's just not a priority during this season of my life."

And so by saying no, you create space for what truly matters, and by focusing on what truly matters, you have to begin to say no. And then finally, the power of no lies in choosing what you say yes to. And this goes back to what I was just saying. When you begin to say yes to what truly matters, what truly aligns, the no becomes a powerful tool to help you live in alignment with your decisions, and with your goals.

Now, when I was preparing for this episode, I initially thought that this was going to be mostly about saying no to the constant demands and requests of other people. But then I realized that there's another important no that we need to be using in our lives, and it's the no of more stuff in our lives. Because our society pushes us towards a scarcity mindset in the first place, constantly seeking more, more, and more. We see advertisements all of the time. We are constantly being promoted this idea that more is better. But the truth is the constant pursuit of more stuff often leads to overwhelm and stress and dissatisfaction, and ultimately it leads to this sense of emptiness. You can be surrounded by a lot of things, but it feels empty because what put it there in the first place? Probably the fear of missing out. How many times have we said, "I need to get five of these shirts. They're on sale." And you fear missing out on the good price point, right?

And so you get five shirts and it ends up just cluttering your closet. You didn't even like the shirts really in the first place, you just thought you were getting a good deal. There are so many examples of this in our lives. And this is why no is about elegance. It's about quality in all aspects of our lives. The power of no lies in saying no to the junk, to the low quality. And that's different for all of us, right? I'm not here to tell you what's junk and what's high quality, you will know by how it makes you feel in the long term because, in the short term, it feels good to accumulate and to buy stuff, but in the long term, when you look around at the things that you have, is it bringing you joy? Are you truly appreciating it?

Because no is about saying yes to a quality life. It's you prioritizing meaningful experiences over fleeting trends and cultivating deep connections over superficial engagements. Because remember, true fulfillment, what we're really after, it comes from within. It doesn't come from external validation, and it definitely doesn't come from more stuff. So in addition to the guide, I wanted to give you some things to think about as it relates to the power of saying no. And the first thing I want you to think about is, what areas in your life do you struggle with saying no? Have you noticed that

there are specific situations or people or types of requests that make it difficult for you to say no? And then think about what emotions or thoughts typically arise when you consider saying no. Are you telling yourself things like, "I'm so selfish."? Or maybe you're telling yourself, "I'm going to miss out," Or, "They're going to be upset with me."

It's so important that we just watch ourselves and that we understand what is motivating us to live out of alignment with our values and our desires and our goals. Also, consider the potential consequences of not saying no in these situations. So allow yourself to really think through, if I say yes to this, if I'm unwilling to say no, what impact is it going to have on my time, on my energy and my well-being? And is it hindering your ability to pursue your goals and what's important to you? And then I want you all to choose one situation where you'd like to practice saying no more effectively. Maybe it's at work, maybe it's with a friend, maybe it's a particular situation. But where would you like to practice saying no more effectively?

And this is where you need to download the guide. Again, you can go to [schoolofselfimage.com/power](https://schoolofselfimage.com/power) because I give you ways to say no in a very assertive and yet kind manner because I know that that is one of our challenges.

We're afraid that we are going to be rude, we're afraid that we're not going to say it right, and for many of us, it's a new skill that we're practicing. So I wanted to give you some examples of how to say no, and that will be in the guide. But for now, just pick one situation where you want to practice saying no more, and then think about how you can politely and yet assertively say no to it, to them, to him or her. And then as you're doing this, think about the positive outcome that you're going to expect from saying no in the situation. How will this affect your well-being, your productivity, and your energy? How will it empower you to take back your time and focus on your priorities? And then it really comes down to practice, you all. It comes down to practicing. We can start small.

What are some of the small things that you're saying yes to that you want to say no to? Let's start there. Let's gather some successes. Let's gather some evidence of not only your ability to say no but also for you to see the positive impact that no can have on your life. We are wired to pursue pleasure and avoid pain, and so if you're constantly focused on the pain of saying no, you're constantly focused on people being upset with you or missing out or whatever it is that causes you to say yes when you want to say no, if that's what you're constantly focused on, you are constantly going to engage in that behavior because you don't want to experience that consequence. You're focused

on the pain of saying no, and what I want you to do is begin to focus on the pain of saying yes to everything. Really allow yourself to look at your life over a timeframe.

If I continue to say yes to all of the demands, to all of the things coming at me that I don't want to say yes to, what is going to be the result to your mental well-being, to your physical well-being, and to your overall life? But then we want to look at the pleasure of saying no. What do you have to gain? What good is going to come from you saying no? And at the end of the day, I just love knowing that I'm living in integrity. I love knowing that I am being honest with myself and the people around me. And I haven't always been, right? I lived a large part of my life lying to everybody. Not on purpose, but to me when you say yes to something that you don't really want to do, it's like you're lying. You're not being honest.

And more than anything, I just want to live a life of integrity, an honest life where I'm real with the people around me, where I'm not doing things out of fear, but I'm doing them because I really want to do them because it feels like love, it feels like joy. It's something I truly want to do. I'm not doing it out of fear because a life built on fear is going to lead only to more fear. You can't outdo the fear, which is what we often try to do. "If I say yes enough to people, then maybe I can get out from under this," And you just end up burying yourself under a big boulder of yes. And the only way to break free from this is to begin to utilize the power of no. What are you going to say no to this week?

What are you currently saying yes to that you really don't want to do any longer? Are you willing to be uncomfortable in order to get your life back? Are you willing to do the hard things, which is experiencing an emotion so that you can take care of your well-being so that you can have more energy, and that you can have more joy? I hope your answer is yes, because as someone who has utilized the power of no after years of being afraid of it, I can tell you, it's one of the best two-letter words in my vocabulary. And again, if you want the guide to accompany this episode, you can head to [schoolofselfimage.com/power](https://schoolofselfimage.com/power). Let's get your power back with a simple two-letter word. Have a beautiful week, my friends, and I cannot wait to see you in next week's episode. Cheers.

Before you go, let me ask you something. Are you feeling stuck, like you're running in place but never really getting anywhere? What I want you to know is that there's nothing wrong with you. You are not broken, but your approach probably is. If you're ready to stop making the same mistakes, engaging in the same behaviors, and discovering the key to unstoppable momentum, join me for my free masterclass called



Powerfully Ever After, where I reveal three hidden shifts that will crack open your potential and unlock your dream life. Stop settling for almost or someday, this is your chance to create your powerfully ever after. You can go to [www.schoolofselfimage.com/after](http://www.schoolofselfimage.com/after) and join now. It's free, it's fast, and most importantly, it's fun. I'll see you in the class.