

The Enlightenment of Saying “No”

Susan Hayman, Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Durham, NC

Based on Krista Tippett’s “On Being”

Group Business

Chalice Lighting/Chime/Silence/Chime

Opening Words

Thinking you are a bad person for saying no is a symptom of the “disease to please”

Check-in

Topic Introduction

When I suggest that people simplify their day by saying No to something, I often hear people say, “But I’d rather say yes!” Of course — saying Yes sounds so much more positive! I’ll say Yes to yoga, and wonderful projects, and gardening!

But where does the room for these beautiful new things come from? We have to admit to ourselves that there’s a limit to how much we can do in a day, and that our days are already full. We have limits.

So we have to say No first. We have to clear up some space by saying No to things we’d like to do, but that are taking up space in our lives — space that could be used by something we really want to do. Say No to all those things we said Yes to over time, that have accumulated and piled up like driftwood.

Saying Yes to everything means you really have time for nothing. You can’t possibly say Yes to everything, because where will you fit it all? Want to go to every meeting, every event, every coffee? Want to do every project that comes along? Your days will be crazy, and you’ll have no rest, and what’s more, you’ll likely not meet all your obligations.

Saying Yes to everything means you’re not really saying Yes — it means you’re not setting priorities. You’re not making a serious commitment. You’re not being conscious about your life.

Instead, I propose we adopt Derek Sivers’ idea: don’t say yes anymore. Either say Hell Yeah, or No. Say Yes to less, and simplify your life.

Group Reflection – Three aspects of saying “no”

- Be honest, especially when it is most difficult
- Be yourself – especially when people are suggesting you be something you are not.
- Say “no” so that you are able to commit to “yes.”

Some questions

- Is saying no difficult for you?
- What has been the cost to you of saying yes when you really needed to say no?
- What do you need to say no to so that you have room for something else in your life?

Open Discussion

Closing Words and Chalice Extinguishing

If you don’t learn to say no, you use your energy in ways that don’t make you happy. Do enough of that and you actually get physically ill — anxiety, headaches, heart attacks, cancer, autoimmune illnesses; utter enough unconscious “yeses” and your body says the biggest, most finite no of all.

Likes and wishes

Who does the next group?

Extinguish chalice/chime ringing