Purpose & Filter

It would be a bit extreme to say NO to everything, so the first step is to clarify your purpose (what you say *yes* to). You can get a quick definition of your purpose with the exercise here. With a clearer definition of your purpose you can now imagine a FILTER for requests, tasks and opportunities. Should they get through your filter or not?

Additionally: If it isn't a full-body, purpose driven: *'hell, yes'* then it should be a no. Say yes only to what sparks joy.

You should also clarify the purpose (the why) for the precious time and energy you're aiming to save!

Some Techniques

1. Say no clearly but with **kindness**. Avoid time related excuses such as: *I'm too busy.* Time is perceived as being under our control so it is seen as a personal preference that you're not using your time for me. People respond more positively to excuses out of perceived personal control such as resource issues, prior obligations or commitments.
2. Say no but provide an **alternative:** I can't but Bob might.
3. No with **humour:** I'd be rubbish at that. Try Bob.
4. Yes, but what would you like me to **drop** as I'm at capacity.
5. Get thinking time, **delay** your answer: Let me get back to you.
6. Alternative delay: Yes, but **not until** … check diary.
7. **Hide.** Become hard to find. Avoid requests altogether.
8. **Block** out time in your calendar so you're not able to say yes. Or have buffer time that can only be scheduled the day before.
9. **Practice** NO with easier situations, requests or people. You can always say yes later.
10. **Imaginary PA.** Invent a strict puppet PA who answers all your requests for you. Or even hire a real PA to say NO for you.

Simple purpose statement
Without over-thinking, answer these questions and use the material to craft a quick purpose definition.

My purpose is to … (list three verbs that feature in what you do. Or Strengths you use regularly, or a line about what you're uniquely skilled at)

For who, or with, or to … (a person, group, cause or type of person, user, client or customer that you do the above for, to or with)

Who need … (what is their unmet need that you help with?)

Because, or so that … (how is the above changed or improved, what does it enable or help, why is it important?)

> **The practical exercise this week is about reflecting on your actions and trying a few ideas.**

Find a time to jot a few notes at the end of each day.

You could continue your 'purpose' enquiry by noting what during the day was clearly *on purpose* for you or sparked joy and what you should have said NO to.

You can note which techniques you used and how that went down. And how you might need more practice.

Are you clear what your FILTER is for the various roles you have in your days? Note how you acted on this.

Best of all, note what you successfully said NO to and how much time and energy that saved.

> **Quick wins.** It isn't just other people you can say NO to. Free up time from screens, passive watching, social scrolling, notifications. Make more energy available by getting to bed earlier.

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7

Here's a quick indicative test based on David McClelland's model of social motivation. Compare each set of 3 options and rate each option **(from 0 = not like you at all, to 10 = exactly like you).** Then add up the column scores to give you a total out of a possible 100. NB, each box needs a score.

1
When doing a job, I prefer to have specific goals.
I prefer to work alone and am eager to be my own boss.
I seem to be uncomfortable when forced to work alone.

2
I go out of my way to make friends with new people.
I enjoy a good debate.
After starting a task, I am not comfortable until it is completed.

3
I enjoy offering advice to others.
I prefer to work in a group.
I get satisfaction from seeing tangible results from my work.

4
I work best when there is some challenge involved.
I would rather give direction than take direction.
I am sensitive to others – especially when they are mad.

5
I like being able to influence decisions.
I accept responsibility eagerly.
I try to get personally involved with my superiors.

6
I place importance on my reputation or position.
I have a desire to out-perform others.
I am concerned with being liked and accepted.

7
I enjoy and seek warm, friendly relationships.
I attempt complete involvement in a project.
I want my ideas to predominate.

8
I desire unique accomplishments.
It concerns me when I am being separated from others.
I have a desire to influence others.

9
I think about consoling and helping others.
I am verbally fluent and persuasive.
I am restless and innovative.

10
I set goals and think about how to attain them.
I think about ways to change people.
I think a lot about my feelings and the feelings of others.

– Totals

Human Motivation or Need Theory

Achievement
This person needs to set and accomplish challenging goals. Takes calculated risks to accomplish goals. Likes to receive regular feedback on progress and achievement. Often likes to work alone. *This is the score in the left column.*

Power / Influence
This person wants to control and influence others. Likes to win arguments. Enjoys competition and winning. Enjoys status and recognition. *Score in the middle column.*

Affiliation
This person wants to belong to the group. Wants to be liked, and will often go along with whatever the rest of the group wants to do. Favours collaboration over competition. Doesn't like risk or uncertainty. *Score in the right column.*

- This model is useful for exploring interpersonal and group dynamics or the diversity of a team. Teams and particular projects benefit from the right balance of types.
- If your scores are fairly balanced then you're able to switch between motivational preferences.
- If one of the totals is clearly higher than the others then you are likely to be more consistent in that drive and can find it hard to switch to any of the others.
- There's a lot more to say about the pluses and minuses of each of these motivational models. You can find more online.
- **In the context of Saying No, the model highlights how high scoring affiliators find it hard to say NO.** The other two types are less likely to be here ;-)

Affiliators are often in professions where they help other people. They sometimes describe themselves as people-pleasers. They understand the costs of saying yes too often but find this one of the hardest behaviours to change.

Sadly, affiliators, who need this PDF most, are far less likely to stick to the work because there's no relevant motivation. You're already busy and there are no immediate relationship or dopamine rewards – If this is true for you, how might we tackle this conundrum? Let me know ... Try not to get to the point when you *have to* change due to burnout or acute stress.

Strong Affiliators

High affiliators require warm interpersonal involvement, approval, regular contact and strong bonds which make them feel important. Within relationships and group processes, affiliators preserve relationships and are tuned in to cues to create acceptance, liking and reciprocity. This is accomplished in part by responding to requests for (or generating opportunities to) help.

Family, school and society encourage some of us to be this way, to be good (and helpful). It is rarely discouraged by other motivational types who're more likely to be in leadership positions. If you're an affiliator, not many people are going to encourage you to *do less* or *be less compliant*. **But you can make changes yourself.**

Breaking the challenge down

The challenge can be hard work but don't make it unnecessarily so. I would encourage you to break the challenge, of saying no, into manageable steps and small experiments. Start with …

- Who would be the easiest people or low risk circumstances to practice saying no to? Prepare in advance. Make small wins.
- What are the techniques you can prepare, that you're comfortable using (see Week 1)?

Disputations

A *disputation* is you exploring your own patterns of negative thinking; the *imagined consequences* of saying no. What would happen if you imagined you were no longer perceived as good or helpful.

At the heart of a disputation is the untangling of the connection between your deep automatic ideas and your behaviour. If it is an *idea* at the route of your behaviour (e.g: that *they* won't like you anymore) it isn't a fact. *Ideas* can be disputed and changed.

Self-help **CBT** (sites, apps or books) or **The Work** (snippet below) by Byron Katie are good resources to help with disputations.

1. Is it true. (Using the idea: *they won't like me* for example)
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?
3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe the thought?
4. Who would you be without the thought.

In the first week the exercise was to review the day at the end.

> **The practical exercise this week is to set an intention at the *start* of each day.**

Intention setting links to the purpose clarification described last week. Purpose might be a general, overarching sense, whereas an intention is a clear description of an action, objective or highlight for the day or task ahead.

If you set an intention (and if you want to go the full distance then make a schedule) then you can be clearer about what to say NO to – and once you've achieved your intention, you're free to do what you like.

Intention setting is the most frequently used Day Crafting tool for many Apprentices. It solves a problem that we have in most of our days which is to clarify what the highlight should be.

This is not necessarily about getting more done; it is about deciding ahead of time what the focus or most satisfying part of the day should be. Once that is decided, your mind can be more aligned and you'll have more energy available in your thinking.

> Continue to note which techniques you've used or any other key learning.

Day 8
Day 9
Day 10
Day 11
Day 12
Day 13
Day 14

*7.30pm optional
Zoom call, email
Bruce for link!*

Push or pull?

How do the hours of your average days get filled? Are tasks *pushed* to you – or do you *pull* tasks in when you have the capacity to do them? *What's the difference?*

Requests are attempts to push a task to you. Even if it is a polite invite, in this terminology, someone else is wanting to push a task onto your schedule – you may have the option to say yes or no. Push requests aren't only external, you might be able to identify an internal 'should' voice that seems to push you to saying yes when it would be wiser to say no (affiliators experience this).

The extreme version of **a push system** (that schedules your hours) means that you end up with an overflowing to-do list: you're stressed, reactive and less able to wisely manage your time. When you're busy and stressed, you make poor decisions about your capacity and the estimated time and effort future tasks will take which makes the problem worse.

A pull system puts you in control of what you do. Tasks and requests are not pushed to you, instead you pull the next task or project your way when you have the capacity. Because your cognitive resources are less distracted, your work is reflective and of a higher quality. In fact you may get more done and feel far less stressed. To highlight the obvious, everything is a *no* until *you* say it is a *yes.* If you think this sounds unrealistic, there are many extremely productive teams and industries that function like this – not to mention independent artists and craftspeople and most likely you on a free day or when you're on holiday.

The consequences of responsibility

In Day Crafting: The Introductory Workbook we explore contrasting mindsets. In one of these mindsets the day is happening to us and we think we don't have any control or agency to change. Something else is usually to blame. But the *I'm-stuck* frame is an *idea* not the truth. The real problem is facing up to the consequences of taking responsibility and making a change or a decision.

> **Some of us know that there is a big NO that we need to make but we're scared of taking responsibility for the consequences.**

> Being busy is not a competitive advantage. The practical exercise this week is to find the **80/20 NOs.**

The 80/20, Pareto principle says that 80% of the consequences come from 20% of the causes.

What are the smallest NOs you can make that free up the most time or energy? What, each day, is the one decision you can make that will have the biggest effect?

Push / Pull
You could also use the week to make notes each day about what tasks were pushed to you and which you pulled? Is it possible to change the system around your scheduling to tip it more towards a pull system?

Day 15	
Day 16	
Day 17	
Day 18	
Day 19	
Day 20	
Day 21	

Preparation

Simply put, preparation is a secret superpower, it is a core method in Day Crafting. It can be anything that makes future tasks and behaviours easier. In terms of a day when we should have said no but said yes too often, preparation in advance might be the key action. For example, we can take more time when estimating.

Most of us suffer from the planning fallacy. We assume we'll have more time and energy in the future and that tasks will take less time and energy than they actually do. We can see the doing part of the task (probably the bit we enjoy or might look forward to) but we forget the *opportunity cost* and what's called *administrative overhead.* This is all the emails, admin, friction and miscellaneous stuff that we don't think about that easily doubles the duration.

- Do you know what your time and energy capacity is?
- Are you regularly over your capacity?
- How can you harmonise what's coming in with what you're able to do?
- What techniques can you try to improve your estimating?

If we're regularly at 120% we should aim to be at 80% or less.

Integrity Cleanse

I've thrown a few challenging ideas into The Art of Saying No and here's the next experiment. It comes from writer Martha Beck. Long story short, she was dying of being an good affiliator.

Her life-saving intervention was to interrupt her day, every 30 minutes and ask herself at that moment **if she was lying** (conforming, being inauthentic etc). The result was fairly radical; she realised the meaning of 'living a lie' and lost or changed just about every aspect of her life – but instead found her 'true self'.

Pick one day in the next week. Set an alarm every 30 minutes. Ask yourself, 'am I lying'. Work out what you would like instead.

Next

If you'd like to explore Day Crafting further, you can find links on the website to **workbooks, courses** and **1:1 sessions.** A great next step would be: **Day Crafting: The Introductory Workbook**

In the first week the exercise was to review the day that has just happened to learn about our default behaviour.

In the second week the exercise was to set an intention for the day. How did this workout?

In the third week the exercise challenged you to find the one NO that would free up the most time.

In this fourth week …

The practical exercise is to step back and view the system around your work process and prepare some schedules in advance to protect the time and energy that you want.

Day 22
Day 23
Day 24
Day 25
Day 26
Day 27
Day 28