

# Just Say NO!

By Suzanne Takowsky

Do you have trouble saying NO! to a controlling spouse, or demanding boss? How about nagging kids who have you wrapped around their fingers? Do you find yourself surrounded by friends who pass the buck to you? Then, there's the "Can I go ahead of you guy," in the grocery check-out line, and the waiter who gets your order wrong, but expects you to eat it without complaining. Why do we have such a difficult time saying NO!? At first glance, not being able to say NO! looks like a lack of courage or assertiveness. But the real culprit is self-esteem, or rather lack of it. Most women question whether or not they even have the right to say NO! — to deny anyone — anything — ever.

Women struggle saying NO! more often than men. Toss something unappealing at a man and watch how fast a look of "you must be kidding" appears on his face, and how fast a quick NO! flies out of his mouth. It's a reflex action without hesitation and void of guilt. Men could care less about winning popularity contests. But from an early age, girls are drilled into a people-pleasing agenda we are expected to stick to for life.

**Rule #1** on the people-pleasing list it says it is my lifetime responsibility to make sure everyone around me is happy. This means put their wishes and needs above my own.

**Rule #2** if the people around me aren't happy, it is my obligation to make them happy. Translation: makes sure everyone likes me and thinks I'm a superwoman doing everything all the time.

Once women see the reality... it's easy to see why we have such a difficult time saying NO! After all, hearing us say NO! does not make us popular or well-liked. People-pleasing girls feel inclined to say YES! to stay on the upside



of...YOU'RE AMAZING! Self-esteem is owning your power and being in charge of your life. The building blocks for self-esteem revolve around knowing what is good or bad for you. Set boundaries. Then when someone steps over the line, you are confident enough to stop them without remorse. Saying NO! takes guts and practice. The first time you say NO! the tone of your voice most likely will range from Pitbull to Chihuahua. But practice makes perfect, and soon each time someone makes a demand or suggestion you find intrusive on your time or life, a NO! will fly out of your mouth faster than upchuck from bad Chinese food.

## A Few Suggestions To Keep In Mind When You Say NO!

After you say NO!, don't get sucked into a discussion on why. Stay focused. Someone asked something of you that you don't want, can't do or don't want to do. PERIOD. The less assertive you saying NO!, the better chance for someone to change your mind. The BIBLE says...Being a YES! girl has no relevance to how much you'll be appreciated by those doing the asking. It mostly works the opposite. The more you give, the less you are appreciated. The people busy with their own lives, with their own agendas and with important things to accomplish are usually the ones doing the asking. They don't have the time to cater to others. They leave that to the people who can't say NO!

Women make it through life with a minimum of self-esteem, believing that saying YES! is key to survival. But being accountable to yourself is what survival is about. Women bottle up their emotions, discount their feelings, and endure the silent suffering which accompanies a life filled with YES!. Our self-esteem is reflected in what we say, think and do. It's a powerful indicator of how we see the world, and how the world sees us. If we are the sacrificer, the server, the pleaser, we will NEVER be the achiever, the master, the leader.

It's time to acknowledge your veto power.

**NO! to friends:** "No-can-do car pool. I'm busy on Tuesday afternoons."

**NO! to children:** "No, you can't watch TV until your room is cleaned."

**NO! to in-laws:** "I would love to visit, but this weekend is jammed."

**NO! to an annoying suitor:** "There is a woman for you, it's just not me."

**NO! to check-out line crashers:** "The line starts back there!"

Feel the freedom of a righteous NO! ●



# . YOU ASKED!

By Suzanne Takowsky

**Q.** I am 37 years old and was married for nine hellish years. My husband and I couldn't even sit together and have a cup of coffee in the morning. We had nothing in common, didn't have any mutual friends and hardly went anywhere. I felt so alone and like a prisoner the entire time we were married.

I have been divorced now for two years. I am having the time of my life. Before I got married to the slug, the only thing I could think about was getting married. Then, when I finally got married, it dawned on me that unless you're married to the right person, being married equals doing time behind bars.

I have a great job and I am meeting a ton of men, plus I have lots of great girlfriends I pal around with. Now that I have backed off trying to be married, I am seeing all the advantages of being single.

My question: How many men is it socially acceptable to date at the same time? I don't want to look like a slut, but I want to have a great time and go to a lot of places. I am not hooked on anyone special and want to have some fun to make up for those nine BORING years with my ex. Also, how should I introduce these men into my social circle if they see me out with different men? I have two children and I am feeling pressure from my parents to settle down again, but they have no idea the hell I went through.

**A.** You can date as many men as you like. You're a single woman. However, there are a few suggestions I hope you take into consideration and keep in mind as you man hop from one to the other.

First, you didn't say whether or not you are sleeping with any or all of these men. I hope you are using protection to keep yourself safe from sexually transmitted diseases. All it takes is a one minute brain fart and your life could be on the line with an STD that causes you pain, suffering and even death (AIDS).

Secondly, although you may be having a great time now, dating a football team of men can become overwhelming, so be careful. There are names to remember, dates to juggle, and then there are those holidays. Which one to spend with which guy? Birthdays can be tricky. I believe as long as you are honest with all of your men...*"I want you to know I am dating other men and although I enjoy our time together, I'm not ready to settle down..."* you'll be fine.

Third, If you have the guts to accept a date, then take the responsibility to let a man know when it's not working, and it's time to move on. Don't keep a menu of hangeroners around to keep you busy on a slow night. Date a man for as long as it works with integrity, then kindly be honest and let him go if it comes to that, hopefully keep him as a friend if possible.

Fourth, I would refer to your dates by name. Simply...*"This is Gene, Joe...etc."* It's nobody's business what you do or with whom. For all they know, it could be a chum from high school. "Boyfriend" is out, and "friend or pal" will make your date look and feel like romantic chump change.

Last. I noticed you put your children at the end of your "Can Do List" and for a mother, that causes me concern. Although your marriage was miserable and you are happy to be single again, your children might not feel the same about their home being torn apart and their mom out at night dating the planet. I would keep your "men" away from your house and your children until you settle on someone you truly like. After having lived through a bad marriage between their parents, helping your children over any bumps should be your priority. ●