

The art of saying ‘no’

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Can you lend me some money?

If you have it, and this is a one-off that will 1) _____ off catastrophe, do it. But if this is part of your relationship, that they’re always asking for money, never pay it back and think you’re made of gold, at some point you’ll have to say “no”. Do it with compassion – this situation, in which you are the money bags, was co-created, half by you. Beware the 2) _____. You’ll probably have to say “no” more than once for it to stick. Ask yourself whether what you usually do actually helping. Are you blocking that person from figuring out something for themselves? We can be sensitive to what someone’s going through without 3) _____ them of their responsibilities.

Your boss: Will you take on this new project (you don’t have time for)?

You need to set a boundary but you don’t want to look unwilling. The first thing you need to say is: “Thank you so much for the opportunity.” Then you just need to 4) _____ out what it would mean: “I’m going to have to postpone project X, which was important to the client. So, which one would you like me to prioritise?” It’s more stressful at work because there’s a formal chain of command, and the expectation is that you’ll say “yes”. But this is the case when you have to practise saying “no”, because it’s less emotionally charged. What you’re doing strategically is trying to unnerve the boss, while staying 5) _____.