How-To Say No at Work

Do you find yourself not accomplishing everything you set out to do each day in the work place? Does the adage "not enough hours in the day" ring true on a regular basis? Do you constantly put the needs of others before your own? If your answer is yes to any of these questions you are likely what is commonly referred to as a "people pleaser." Helping others is a core value and certainly an admirable one but if you're not careful, it's one that can be dangerous for your productivity, state of mind and physical health. If you frequently find yourself stressed and burned out at the end of the day, learning to tactfully say NO is a skill worth developing.

Make Yourself a Priority

You probably make it a habit to help others and go the extra mile. But when was the last time you made it a priority to take care of your own needs before someone else's? In order to be at your best, you have to be in the right spot to do so. Prioritizing things like exercise, getting enough sleep and taking a day off all go a long way in helping you recharge and stay fresh.

Set Healthy Boundaries

By nature, the word "no" carries a negative connotation that most people are afraid to express. However, it has many positive benefits that not only will find you in a healthy frame of mind but being more productive as well. The first step to saying no is setting healthy boundaries and sticking to them. This simply means clearly stating your priorities and limits and communicating them to those around you. If you make this behavior a regular practice, it lets people know that you can't be taken advantage of and they will respect you for it.

Check Your Schedule

You're probably inundated with requests to take on more work or help with items outside the scope of what you normally do. While it's easy to immediately say yes to helping out with something, it's perfectly acceptable to let someone know you need to look at your schedule and will respond accordingly. If you have the time to fit something extra in great, but if you're already committed then letting people know is reasonable as well.

What's in it For You?

While asking the question of what potential gain you might receive in return for helping someone out might seem selfish, it's important to consider. There are plenty of people out there that are all too ready to accept help but unwilling to return the favor in the future. Before you commit to taking on work for someone else, ask yourself the question of the likelihood of that favor being reciprocated.

Ask Someone You Trust if You're Unsure

We are all asked to help out from time to time. If you find yourself on the fence of saying yes or no however, take the time to seek the opinion of someone you can confide in. By verbalizing your concerns, you not only gain a valuable outside opinion, but allow yourself to consider all the options more clearly. Even if you don't take the advice, you'll at least have more information to help you make the decision that is best for you.

Delegate

The demands of the modern workplace can be overwhelming. Trying to accomplish every task on your own can lead to burnout in the office and negatively effect your health and relationships outside of work as well. If you work on a team or within a specific department, realize that your colleagues are there to help. By delegating tasks or projects to the people around you, you not only save yourself time, but demonstrate to others that they are valuable and can be trusted. This spells good news for everyone involved.

Provide Context

One of the most critical components of saying no is providing context. If you simply tell someone no you risk coming off as aloof or not caring. But if you make it a point to honestly explain to the person requesting your help that your plate is already full and that you are willing to say yes in the future, you come across as respectful and honest.

Say Yes to the Person and No to the Task

Empathy is a sign of high emotional intelligence. If someone asks for your help and you simply don't have the time or resources to do so, tell them that you understand the situation they are in but that you simply can't this time around. Saying no in this manner makes it clear that you value the person in question and are willing to help in the future.

Saying no is counterintuitive for most people. However, learning to do so in a tactful manner when it makes sense goes a long way toward increasing your own productivity and well-being. If you take the steps necessary to make yourself a priority, set professional boundaries and evaluate all your options before you say yes or no, you'll be in a position to make the best decision for yourself and those around you.

The Importance of Mental Health in the Work Place

The demands of the job in the American workforce are unlike any other in the world. For salaried employees this is especially true. Long hours, weekends and constantly being available are the norm. The truth is that most of us are "at work" even when we're not at work. In order to function at full capacity, it's vitally important that you are healthy not just physically but mentally as well. While employers have increasingly made physical well-being a top priority through initiatives like step programs and on-site gyms, not enough is being done to ensure mental and emotional well-being for employees. In order to reach your maximum potential, it's paramount that mental and emotional well-being are a top priority. Identifying needs and having the appropriate resources available is crucial to the success of you, your team and the entire organization.

Recognizing and Identifying a Problem

Some 44 million Americans suffer from a mental health condition. Though sometimes tricky, identifying mental health concerns upfront is integral for not only your ability to do your job, but your overall well-being. Symptoms of poor mental health can be subtle, but knowing what to look for upfront goes a long way. If you notice yourself being withdrawn, complacent, having an inability to focus or seem unmotivated, there is a good chance that something extraneous is affecting your performance.

Addressing Mental and Emotional Health

If you've identified symptoms and suspect that you might not be in a healthy mental or emotional state, it's something that certainly needs to be addressed. Finding a safe and confidential space to have a one-on-one conversation with someone you trust is the first step. When the time is right, schedule a meeting

with your manager or supervisor to have a conversation. Communicating your concerns will not only lift a weight off your shoulders, but allow you to collaborate and plan a healthy course of action.

Caring for Mental and Emotional Health

In order to lead a productive and fruitful existence both at and away from the workplace, it's imperative that you take care of yourself.

1. Journaling

We all have days that are better than others. Sometimes the roller coaster of work and life can seem overwhelming. Setting aside a few minutes each day to simply write your thoughts down can go a long way in putting your mind at ease. Even if it is for five or 10 minutes before bed, putting your thoughts on paper not only provides an immediate outlet, but creates room for reflection down the road when times are difficult. It can provide a window into how far you've come in recent months, or highlight an area that maybe you haven't fully addressed and remind you there may still be some work to do.

2. Practice Gratitude

It's all too easy for us to focus on everything we don't have. Maybe your colleague got the promotion, was awarded that dream trip for sales performance or bought a new car. We find ourselves feeling jealous, inadequate and wondering why it wasn't us that was rewarded for our hard work. Comparing ourselves to others does little good. Instead, make it a point to recognize all that you have to be thankful for and write it down. Much like journaling, making a short list of people and things you are thankful for helps you focus and stay centered.

3. Exercise

Too many of us find ourselves stuck at our desk staring at a computer screen for countless hours every day. This is not only detrimental to our physical well-being, but our mental and emotional well-being as well. When we are physically active, our brain releases endorphins which improve our mood and increase our productivity. Even if it's simply going for a short walk at lunch, making exercise a part of your routine is essential for maintaining a positive frame of mind.

4. Get Enough Sleep

Getting enough sleep is important for your overall health. Continual sleep deprivation is proven to cause anxiety, depression and a host of other problems. Making sure that you get to bed on time and sleep soundly for seven to nine hours is directly linked to happiness and productivity. If you have problems sleeping, consult with your doctor to see what options you might have, and check with your employer to see what health resources are available to address the problem.

5. Be in Nature

We all long to be outside as much as possible. Wouldn't it be great to take that two week-long camping trip at a moment's notice? Unfortunately, for most of us that is simply not realistic. However, finding ways to spend even a little time outside on a regular basis is proven to increase self-esteem, stave off depression and increase creativity. Even if it's going for a short walk or making time to work in your yard or garden, being in nature can go a long way in caring for your mental health.

Meditation

Even though it sounds a bit goofy, the benefits of meditation are countless. From promoting sleep to improving memory, meditation plays a key part in helping you be at our best. Though it can be done at any time, setting aside just ten minutes to meditate in the morning or evening is enough to improve your state of mind. With so many types of meditation available, there is sure to be one that works for you.

The fact remains that most of us are going to spend a large part of our lives working. In order to be at your best, self-care is essential to the process. While physical health is highly important for us to do our jobs, mental and emotional well-being must be looked after as well. By taking even a few small measures to look after yourself in this regard, you're sure to perform at your potential and further enjoy the process.