



## SOME GUIDELINES . . . .

- ...to saying “No”
- ...to expressing an “unpopular” opinion
- ...to asking for what you want
- ...in giving criticism
- ...in accepting criticism

### **Guidelines to Saying “No”**

- Be sure whether you want to say yes or no. If you are not sure, say you will need time to think about it.
- Ask questions if you don’t have enough information to be sure of your answer, e.g., “What do mean, have a *little* fun?”
- Make your answer short. You can give a reason if you want to but more than one reason will sound like an excuse. Reasons and excuses give the other person something to argue about. You don’t owe an explanation!
- You don’t have to have the best argument. You might not even be sure why you want to say no and that is okay, e.g., I’m not even sure why, but I have a strong feeling that’s not what I want to do.
- When you have given your answer, STOP! Let the other person speak, and, if necessary, repeat your answer.
- Shake your head when saying “no.”

### **Guidelines to Expressing an Unpopular Opinion**

- Let others know you have listened and understood what they believe, e.g., “That’s an interesting idea, let me see if I have it right: you believe....”
- Let others know you respect them even though you don’t agree, e.g., “I know you have some good reasons for believing that, but that’s not my view.”
- Express your opinion AS opinion, not as the Truth, e.g., “I have a different idea about it.”
- If it is a question of fact, admit that you could be wrong but would be willing to check with someone who knows, e.g., “I am sure Villanova was in the playoffs that year, but let’s ask Coach for the record.”
- When you and others have stated opinions about a subject, often you begin to repeat yourself. At this point, be willing to accept your differences and move on to something else, e.g., “Looks like neither of us will convince the other, so let’s talk about another game.”

### **Guidelines to Asking for What You Want**

- Be as exact as possible in stating what it is you want, e.g., “I want to be home by midnight. Can you give me a ride now?”
- When stating your limitations, don’t criticize yourself, e.g., “I seem to have figured this out wrong; can you help me?” NOT “I always seem to screw things up; do you think I am hopeless?”
- Avoid negative statements, e.g., “I know I have probably asked too much already so you don’t want to come with me, do you?”
- Don’t try and flatter people or make them feel guilty.
- Be prepared to offer a compromise or negotiate a trade-off.

### **Guidelines for Giving Criticism**

- Plan what you want to say. Think about exactly what the other person has done to anger or hurt you and what you would like them to do differently.
- Choose a time and place that is comfortable for you both to talk. Private and unrushed. Ask, “Do you have time to talk now” or “When can we get together to talk something over?”
- State as exactly as possible what the person did or said and how you felt, using “I” statements, e.g., “When you walked away without answering, I was hurt” or “I felt angry when you broke our date.”
- Avoid name calling and words like NEVER or ALWAYS. Instead say, “You sometimes don’t notice my feelings,” NOT “You’re always insensitive.”
- Say something positive if you honestly can.
- Give only one negative criticism at a time.
- Suggest change that will correct the situation.

### **Guidelines for Accepting Criticism**

- Listen. This means not being ready to defend yourself or counterattack! (Deep breathing will help!)
- Repeat the criticism in your own words to be sure you have it right. This will also give you a minute to calm down.
- Ask for an example of what is being criticized.
- Decide whether it is fair criticism or not. Is it true? If so, is it something you want to change in order to be fair? If you can’t decide on the spot, ask for time to think about it and schedule another meeting time.
- If it is fair, don’t give excuses for having done it. Think of ways you can change your actions or statements in the future. Or ask what the other person would like done differently in the future.
- If it is unfair, respond with “I” statements, e.g., “I think you misunderstood” or “I think you are expecting more of me than I am willing to give” NOT “You don’t understand what I am saying” or “You are being unfair.”
- If you are angry or tempted to counterattack, suggest you postpone further discussion until a time when you are more calm.