

FEATURE

Saying Yes

BY KEN & RENÉE KIZER

The word *yes* stands for *Your Energy Source*. *Yes* is the expression of our innate nature- openness, expansion, and growth. It *adds to* who we are, rather than taking away. *Yes* is our connection to what we need for life- food, faith and love, and a conscious experience of a power larger than us. Food supports us physically, nourishing our health and growth. Faith and love energize us to take care of life, living with peace, passion, power, and respect for ourselves and our neighbors. Linking to a higher power provides a foundation and reference point for expressing our personal power. It is only by opening our heart that we experience life this way.

Saying yes unambiguously can appear to be harder than saying no, but yes always feels better. The courage to exceed past limitations is bolstered by a deep sense of faith, combined with the knowledge and experience of both success and failure. Failure can be a lesson in developing ourselves enough to succeed at the parts of life that matter.

Typically, though, we are more practiced at denying things we don't want than asking for things we do want. In our work with individuals and couples we have noticed that people are much more likely to talk about what they think is wrong and not working, rather than what is right and really working in themselves or their relationship. Their focus tends to go to the negative first, and there is usually a list of all the things that are wrong. When asked what is right or working in their lives, they have to stop and think before they can speak of their successes. The positive list is usually much shorter.

Our innate nature is toward openness, growth, and expansion. Denial, resistance, or suppression are actually slow-motion forms of suicide. These are conscious or unconscious thoughts and actions that result in loss of power- degradation of health, degradation of attitude, and degradation of basic life urge. Each of these contribute to or cause increasing difficulty with love, money, relationships- all areas of life.

The innate nature of God is acceptance: God always says yes to what we might choose to believe, say, or do. Our understanding of God incorporates the idea that God is infinite and unconditional love. Unconditional implies an ability to love without judgment or fear. This means that difficulties with life aren't punishment from on high- it just means we could improve the quality of our thoughts and lives. Struggles are signposts, directing us to things that are out of balance in our lives- they're not purposely sent our way just to make life harder.

Negative attitudes can be subtle; we don't realize how many times a day we deflect or deny gifts from others. Start by noticing how often we say what we don't want, rather than saying what we do want. It isn't just the big things: how do we respond when someone compliments our appearance (when we haven't tried to look good)? Consciously teaching ourselves to find a way to say yes, rather than no, is one practice that can help us become aware how often we emphasize the negative in our lives as opposed to the positive.

Consciously saying yes to what is desirable and appropriate, rather than no to what isn't, takes some effort. Habits always take time to change. Understand there will probably be some lag between making a conscious shift in attitude vs. seeing some positive results. Some of the old attitudes are ancient and may take days or weeks to shift.

One seductive aspect of denial is the belief that we can stop certain undesirable things from happening, while theoretically making more room for desirable things. The opposite is true, actually. When we shut down to anything (or any feeling), we shut down to everything, to the same degree. It's probably fair to say most people attempt to suppress guilt or anger, at one time or another, and that they have some measure of success. The problem is that the ability to love is similarly suppressed.

Saying yes is a surrender, an acceptance, and it is a fiercely proactive position, not a passive one. Often we believe the opposite is true because the word surrender carries some connotation of weakness or passive attitude. However, in our context here, it's an act of courage and strength. Saying yes to love requires dropping personal boundaries and taking a risk to become intimately involved with another. Without a strong sense of self and well-being, doubts and fears from the past can cause ruptures, or blocks our ability to give and receive love.



Similarly, ending an unhealthy relationship or becoming successful are also risks that require considerable self-acceptance, combined with clear intention and considerable effort, for a positive outcome. Most of us have mastered failure- we don't like it, but we've grown accustomed to it, and it's familiar. The courage to succeed takes us out of our comfort zone. It's not familiar, and it takes practice to become accustomed to it and accustomed to expecting it (vs. expecting to fail). That doesn't mean we won't occasionally fail. It just means we don't invite failure and that we aren't thrown off-center by it.

There is also another phenomenon at work: whatever we focus our attention on tends to increase. It's a common belief that we make more room for good things by denying negative ones, but the attention we give to saying no just increases the power those negative things exert in our lives.

There are some subtleties here: ending an unhealthy relationship can be seen as denying or running from love, or it can be seen as having enough self-regard to leave an unhealthy or abusive situation. The remaining feelings of the two motives will likely be quite different. When we run from or deny love, there is typically some guilt or anger involved- perhaps we weren't courageous enough to face the other person and take a stand, or perhaps we just straight-out ran away from it all. These feelings can persist in spite of the fact that leaving might have been the healthiest thing to do.

When we take a stand for what we want in a relationship, there is usually a feeling of satisfaction for taking care of ourselves; there is an expectation of having better quality relationships in the future; and there is typically some relief after ending emotional pressure from an uncomfortable situation. On the other hand, people who don't know how to say yes sometimes run away from the possibility of genuine, lasting love (or success in other parts of life).

In the same way, the difference in saying yes and no can be applied to every area of life that requires choices be made. Just thinking of the word no begins to negate the positive thoughts that we are also holding. This doesn't mean we can't ever say no- certain situations can definitely benefit from a strongly spoken "No!" Sometimes we need to set firm boundaries before we can find our "Yes".

The idea here is that no tends to support separation, guilt, fear, anger, victimization, and unconscious choice. However, saying a strong "Yes!" tends to support life, love, trust, acceptance, peace, and an empowered, creative, and conscious choice. Any relationship, especially an intimate one, requires a willingness to consciously live a yes-oriented connection. Success in life requires a willingness to shift no into yes, so that we can become self-realized and create the relationships we desire to have with ourselves, God, and others.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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