

# JUST SAYING NO - THREE METHODS

## GOALS:

- To practise three different methods of saying *no*.
- To understand some of the blocks to refusing requests.

## RATIONALE:

Assertiveness does not imply that we must refuse all requests. However, there are times when we have the right to consider our needs before the needs of others and the right to refuse requests made of us. Sometimes we may wish to give a reason for refusing a request; other times, we may say no and not give any explanation. It is a common tendency for people to over explain to try to justify saying no, or to feel guilty afterwards. In this lesson, we practise saying no assertively and challenge some of the beliefs that make it difficult for us to refuse requests.

In different cultures, there are different norms about situations where it is acceptable and not acceptable to say no. The coach must be sensitive to these issues. The focus in this lesson is to say no when individuals want to and feel they have a right to do so.

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers.

## METHOD:

### Warm up:

Ask participants to think of a situation where they find it difficult to say no (and would like to say no). Give a few examples of saying no : to lending clothes; to helping someone move; to going to a party; to dessert when at a dinner party.

Use the above situations in the following exercises to practise saying no. Have participants pair up with another person and briefly describe their situation to their partner.

### **Exercise 1: Saying No Without Explanation**

Instruct participants to do a short role-play with one partner **A** making the request that the other partner **B** has difficulty refusing. **B** is to say *no* without giving an explanation.

#### **Questions to consider:**

- How did **A** feel?
- How did **B** feel?
- What was the result?

Tell participants to switch roles and **B** makes the request that **A** has difficulty refusing. Process in dyads.

In the large group, ask participants:

- What was your reaction to saying no without an explanation?
- Can you think of any situations in which it feels appropriate to say a flat *no* ?

### **Exercise 2: Over Explaining**

Ask **A** to make the same request of **B** that **B** has difficulty in refusing. Now **B** says no, but will give as many excuses, explanations and justifications as possible.

Have participants discuss their reactions to the exercise in dyads.

Let participants switch roles. **B** now makes the request **A** has difficulty refusing. Discuss reaction in dyads.

In the large group, ask participants:

- What was your reaction to this exercise?
- What happens when you over explain?

### **Exercise 3: Saying No Assertively**

Ask **A** to make the same request of **B**. This time, **B** says *no* assertively. **B** may give a brief explanation, if appropriate. Remind participants to use assertive body language (posture, voice, eye contact).

Let participants switch roles. **B** makes a request of **A**.

**Questions to consider in pairs:**

- How did it feel to say no assertively?
- What was your partner's reaction?
- Would you do this in the real life situation?
- If not, what stops you? What are the internal messages about saying no? What are some rational alternatives to these messages?
- What's the worst thing that could happen as a result of saying no in this situation?
- How would you feel if someone said no to you in a similar situation?

**Questions to consider in the large group:**

- What did you learn about saying no?
- What are some of the blocks?
- What can we do to remove the blocks?

Request volunteers to demonstrate their assertive role-play for the large group. Coach and group give feedback on the role-play, stressing the positive aspects they see. Flipchart advantages and disadvantages of saying no.

Instruct participants to watch for situations in which they would like to say no during the week and report back to the group next week.

**EVALUATION:**

Review the session and ask participants what they have learned.