

# HOW TO STAY SANE AT WORK



**BE HELPFUL WITHOUT SACRIFICING YOUR BOUNDARIES**



# HOW TO STAY SANE AT WORK

## BE HELPFUL WITHOUT SACRIFICING BOUNDARIES

**You are a helpful person.** You want to bring that side of yourself to work, but we all know that work can really test us at the best of times. If you've been in the workforce for a little while, you'll know that helpfulness is welcome, but once you've extended it, some people are more likely to cross your boundaries than not.

Forming friendships at work is vital. It creates a better workplace for you and everyone else there, and workmates are often connections you'll hold onto until long after you've moved on. But any healthy relationship is based on a core set of boundaries, and unfortunately, the workplace is full of boundary-crossing. This is why it's important to know what your limits are at work and stand by them, even if a good friend or a colleague is asking you to change them.

**While small in the moment, these instances can lead to significant interpersonal conflict later on. And in the workplace, these same scenarios can make your place of work a tough place to be. Even worse, the wrong helpful of interpersonal conflict can put your job - your livelihood - at risk.**

So, what's the solution here? Never make another friend at work again? Never be helpful? Not at all. Your new secret weapon for staying helpful, staying sane, and staying secure is simple:

## BOUNDARIES

**Learning how to set boundaries at work (and in life) allows you to offer true help that doesn't compromise your health or safety in the process.** These might seem like polar opposites, but they actually go hand-in-hand. You just need the right strategy to understand your boundaries and make choices that honour them.



INTRODUCING...

# THE CONSEQUENCE FORECAST

I used to struggle with the 'default yes' at work and in life. Any time I needed to say 'NO', or push back against an unfair situation, it felt like the end of the world. Like I had no idea if it was the right thing to do or not. Sometimes, I still struggle with this.

So, I created the Consequence Forecast for myself. A tool that makes you pause, evaluate an offer, and create an alternative way to say 'NO' to honour your boundaries (even if you don't know what those are in the moment). Here's the mantra:

**“I do not have to say ‘yes’ to everything. I have other options.”**

NO	COUNTER OFFER	YES
----	---------------	-----

*In order to make good choices for me, I choose to learn how to think through my options at 'buying' or 'selling' time. I determine how it will affect my emotional, physical, financial, and time-based well-being.*

*I learn how to consider myself and my own needs. I am selective, filtering the needs and impacts of others on my life. I am in control of my time, my energy, and my life.*

*I don't need to say NO to everything. I am very likely to say no to many things. My aim is to learn to get good at it.*

## **HOW TO USE THE FORECAST TO STAY SANE :**

Simply answer the four questions as honestly as possible, and - this is important - from *your* perspective. You're *very good* at thinking about what might happen to others, or how others might be affected by your decision.



## WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF ME?

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I SAY 'YES'?

*What impact will a 'yes' have on my life, both at work and out of it? Am I seeking approval, or choosing 'yes' of my own free will? What are the potential consequences?*



## WHAT HAPPENS IF I SAY 'NO'?

*I think about how it will affect **me** (not whether it will make the person asking angry or disappointed in me, or if it will hurt them).*

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I MAKE A COUNTER OFFER?

*A counter offer is a version of their request that I don't mind doing. I modify it to suit or meet my own conditions, taking my safety at work into consideration.*



## MY DECISION

Based on everything you've laid out above, circle the decision you've made about the request. You'll get better and better at this as you practice it, until you can do it in your head in seconds!

For now, it's okay for the process to be deliberate. This is a skill you have to learn, not something you're expected to know off the bat.

NO	COUNTER OFFER	YES
----	---------------	-----

If you've spent your whole life not saying 'no', this might feel strange. You will need some practice. That's okay! Here is where you can use a 'gentle no'.

Sometimes you can do part of what someone is requesting, or do it in a different way, or at a different time. It's okay to counter offer.

If someone's request meets your needs as well and won't compromise your boundaries, then it's an easy 'yes'!

### **Rephrase their request:**

"Hey, so you asked if I could help you with that project."

### **Respond with your decision:**

"I can't help right now."

### **Explain your boundary (if needed):**

"I have a deadline I can't change, but if you're happy to wait until next week, I'd be happy to help."