



The Magic Key to Dreams and Desires (Tip: A Three Year-Old Knows It)

It is the New Year! It is time to preview our deepest wishes, helping clients do likewise. As we open the treasure chest of hope that we usually lock away, we might want to consider using the “magic key” that will actually root our dreams, stretch our arms to the sky, and enable us to catch the stars falling to earth.

This key is the word “No.”

Many of us have heard author Anne Lamont’s statement: “‘No’ is a complete sentence.” Maybe that notion has spurred us to actually use the term once in a while, when backed into a corner or clarifying its pronunciation for a client. I have discovered, however, that healers have a hard time with the concept. We are givers. We share. We help. “Yes” comes more naturally than “No.” But without a well-seasoned sprinkling of the word “No,” our “Yes’s” get the best of us and we actually do not end up with much of what we truly desire.

One of our inner selves is ready to help us out. It is our inner three-year old, within whom is hidden the psychological edge (called stubbornness) needed to manifest our personal desires. Think of it. To a three year-old, “No” is more than a complete sentence. It is an entire vocabulary; a language unto itself.

As a mother, I have no end of examples from which to draw. Let us start with my oldest.

“Look at the pretty peas,” says mom, holding a spoon with shaky hands, knowing she has already lost the battle before the starting of it.”

“No!”

“Let us pretend the spoon is a rocket and you are a really cool astronaut; or how about you are flying a F14 and these tiny green pellets are the fuel you need to escape this high chair and return to the Power Rangers show?”

“No!”

Do you think Michael ate a single pea throughout that entire stage?

His brother did not really care much about peas, but do you think I could pry him out of his Batman costume or get him through the doors of a drop-in daycare? I pretty much relegated my parenting role to serving as the cape crusader Robin, having moved my business to the home.

During this seemingly intolerable stage, I started to spoon out my own dollops of “No’s.” No running in parking lots; no skipping every meal in lieu of ice cream; no hitting, pinching, and biting—although that one was a harder one to enforce. (Really, would you not be tempted to bite the fellow psycho-toddler hitting you over the head with a GI Joe tank?) Basically, however, my kids left toddlerhood with a pretty strong sense of personal boundaries, mainly because I was usually too tired to argue much.

As adults—as healers—“No” is seldom on the tip of our tongues. Many of us were raised under the obligation of “Yes,” which implies that we are perceived as more likable, compassionate, and generous if we are agreeable and affirmative. My own upbringing underscored these ideals, as my dad’s raised his three girls to “act like ladies.” (And if you were a boy, he would have insisted you become a “gentleman.”) Ladies say “please” and “thank you” and they never, ever say “No,” even when Great Aunt Hazel wants to kiss you with her red lipstick mouth, the kind that leaves bloody-crumbs on your cheek. We did our homework, agreed with our superiors, and did favors for everyone who asked.

This attitude is present in most forms of spirituality, which emphasizes the importance of serving others. How can you



turn away the needy? How can you not do unto others what you would want them to do for you?

The problem is that handing out “Yes’s” - like we are passing out Halloween candy in a house with a stuck doorbell - is that others’ priorities will continually take precedence over our own. It is easy to become so involved in assisting others that we literally cannot take care of ourselves. If we have no energy for ourselves, how will our dreams ignite? When will we cultivate them? I am personally not at my best during the wee hours of the morning.

Our “No’s” do not have to be cold. We can still offer advice or direction. We can refuse to take that emergency client and instead suggest someone else. Or we can simply exercise our inner “three year-old” by saying “No,” even saying “No, thank you,” if we are one of those “nice” three year-olds.

Starting to add more “No’s” can sometimes trigger repressed resentments, the feelings we refused to acknowledge while saying the personally inconsiderate “Yes’s.” Think of how many times you smiled but thought, “How dare they ask this of me?” How often did you perform a task unwillingly while thinking, “I would never ask for this.” My “cure” was to hope that others would become more polite; that they would eventually consider my needs, not only their own.

Well, that is realistic, is it not?

We cannot be in control if others are demanding, obstinate, or desperate; or maybe, just want to ask a question. We can only respond. Resentment brews when we let ourselves, not others down; when we take ourselves out of the formula, instead of leaving ourselves in the quotient.

Sometimes I choke on a “No” because I think my needs are less important than others’ are. One of my personal priorities is making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for my youngest son’s football team. It is not that I like slathering White Wonder Bread with cheap peanut butter and jiggling grape jelly, only to stuff the 40 sandwiches back into the now 40-pound bread bag. (I know, I could use whole wheat bread, but I am under firm marching orders not to embarrass Gabe by making those “horridly dry organic sandwiches.” The truth is that I like being a football mom. No matter what, I do not fill that hour with clients - emergency needs or not. If I am upholding my

bargain with myself, I am actually a nicer person when working with my clients.

So this year, when making a list of everything to which you want to say “Yes”, also consider what to which you are willing to say “No”. Encourage your clients to do the same. Just do not judge what shows up on your dream list. After all, what do you think those efficient three-year-olds are doing with their extra time? They certainly are not eating peas or working. If they are toting attaché cases, those cases are full of toys. Rather, they are donning their Mask Crusader costumes and creating adventures, blowing soap bubbles at hungry dogs and turning their vegetables into flying saucers. They are being and becoming, at the same time. They are using their “No’s” quite well.

As T.S. Eliot said,

Last year’s words belong to last year’s language. And next year’s words await another voice. €



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