MODULE OVERVIEW

Saying no at work: When and how

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Saying no is often seen as a matter of personal comfort. This module shows the opposite: a bad practice that nobody says no to doesn't disappear; it takes root, and Google's Project Aristotle confirms that high-performing teams are those where people dare to speak up. The module names five dysfunctions to refuse, from micromanagement to systemic overload, then offers a range of professional ways to say no: rephrasing, asking questions, setting conditions, and repeating calmly.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Identify what stops you from saying no (fears, fatalism, passive resistance) and the cost of forced yeses.

02 Spot the five dysfunctions to refuse: micromanagement, disrespect, being treated like a child, constant overload, and resistance to new methods.

03 Respond in three steps (rephrase, question how urgent the request really is, and only then answer) to defuse excessive requests.

04 Choose how to say no ("and at the same time," time to think, a condition, a counteroffer) and repeat it without justifying yourself.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants their yes to mean something, knowing they can also say no.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1 **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.

2 **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.

3 **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.

4 **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.

5 **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

Tarek, a town hall receptionist, has a family commitment this Saturday. On Monday, Tarek refused to swap his Saturday shift with his colleague Léo, who insisted on Tuesday. This Thursday, Léo comes back: "Couldn't you move your commitment, though? I almost never ask for anything." What does Tarek answer?

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Amy Edmondson (Harvard) – psychological safety
- Mirror rephrasing – classic active listening technique (close to the work of Carl Rogers)
- Five dysfunctions to say no to – Afthonios method

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Google – Project Aristotle (about 180 internal teams, 2012 to 2015): psychological safety is the most decisive factor in team performance
- Amy Edmondson (Harvard Business School) – theorized and named psychological safety in the 1990s
- Lee & Crockett (1994) – experimental study on assertiveness and stress among nurses
- Sonnentag & Fritz (2007) – psychological detachment from work and recovery

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