

# Ways to Say 'No' More Effectively

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## *The Wall Street Journal:*

Lesley Ronson Brown knew the woman on the phone asking her to serve on the board of a nonprofit was making a good point, detailing how the group would benefit from her leadership skills. Ms. Brown politely explained that she was busy with other volunteer activities and wanted to spend more time with her family.

The woman kept pleading. So Ms. Brown did the only thing she could think to do: She climbed up on the chair in her office—to feel bigger and more powerful, she says—and “practically growled” her answer. “I was trying to say ‘no’ in a lower-octave, tall brunette voice,” says Ms. Brown, who is petite (and was blonde at the time).

One tiny word can be very hard to say.

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When asked to help or to do a favor, whether it is to donate money to charity, fill out a questionnaire or let a stranger use a cellphone, research has shown many people will say “yes” simply because saying “no” would make them even more uncomfortable. This is especially true when people have to give their answer face to face, rather than by email.

And even when people do say “no,” they become more likely to say “yes” to subsequent requests. “They feel so guilty about saying ‘no,’ they feel they need to salvage the relationship,” says Vanessa Bohns, assistant professor of management sciences at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada.

Read the whole story: [\*The Wall Street Journal\*](#)