

Ten Ways to Say No

Taken directly from "The Black Academic's Guide to Winning Tenure—Without Losing Your Soul" by Kerry Ann Rockquemore and Tracey Laszloffy, page 119

Saying no effectively means being clear and assertive. There are multiple ways to say no, and you can choose how you want to do so in any context and interpersonal relationship. By way of example, we offer the following ten ways to say no that range in sentiment and forcefulness:

1. That sounds like a really great opportunity, but I just cannot take on any additional commitments at this time.
2. I am not comfortable with that _____ (situation, task, group of people involved).
3. I feel overwhelmed by service right now, so I am going to have to decline your generous invitation.
4. I am in the middle of _____, _____, and _____, and if I hope to get tenure, I am unable to take on any additional service.
5. I am not the best person for this. Why don't you ask _____?
6. If you can find a way to eliminate one of my existing service obligations, I will consider your request.
7. I would rather say no to your request than do a halfhearted job on the committee.
8. Right now, I need to focus on my research agenda and publication. When I have tenure, I hope to be able to say yes to requests like this one.
9. I cannot serve on your committee right now. But why don't you ask me again next year?
10. No. (Look the asker in the eye and sit in silence.)