



4 WAYS TO AVOID SAYING 'YES'

TO THE PERSON WHO NEVER HEARS 'NO'



PROGRESSIVE
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

When we say 'yes' to something, we say 'no' to something else.

Successful women leaders always have a lot going on. It comes with the territory. So we sometimes have to say no to requests for our time. Most people respect that.

But then there are The Others.

They're always clamoring for your time, and you ***Just. Can't. Tell. Them. No.***

They ask. **You politely say no.**

They cajole: *"But you're perfect for this! I need you!"*

They pout: *"What do you mean, no?"*

They argue: *"It won't take long! You can fit it in!"*

Faced with their stubborn persistence, you cave in. As a result, you're overbooked and stressed.

But there are ways to stop the ***Person Who Never Hears No (PWNHN)***, by recognizing their techniques.

Read on to learn the 4 emotional persuasion techniques — and how to avoid their trap.



Technique 1: The Favor

(“I’ll help you if you help me.”)

How it works:

Making a demand for time sound like a favor persuades us to say yes. After all, when someone asks, “Could you do me a favor?” who blurts, “Nope, not now — catch me later?”

And when someone does one for us, we want to return it — when we’re able, not when we’re pressured to do so. When the PWNHN insists you give time when you CAN’T, it turns into time-harassment.

They might offer you a favor before making an ask; they know the desire to reciprocate. Or, they’ll slyly bring up a time when **YOU** asked **THEM** for a favor and they granted it.

This plays to our sense of obligation: *“Jane helped me when I needed an extra volunteer, so I can’t say no when she needs one.”*



How to Fight It: Don't let them guilt you

Before you think “I should say yes,” take the time to calculate whether you can really do it. Ask when you're needed for the favor. If you've got room, great. If you **DON'T**, give them a firm no.

Be sure to make your answer as final as possible (**NOT** “I might be free on Tuesday...”). PWNHNs know how to jump on a wavering answer, so it's best to avoid giving one.

Try: *“I'd love to help, but I'm booked. Let me know when your next event is — I'll make sure it's on my calendar.”*



Technique 2: The Double-Ask (“If you can’t do that, could you do this?”)

How it works:

The PWNHN is betting that if you say no to one thing, if they ask for something smaller, you’ll say yes.

“Well, if you can’t participate all three days, could you at least do one?”

This technique works because it allows us to at least agree to **something**. Problem is, we’ll often agree to option #2 because it requires less time than option #1 — even if we don’t have time for either.

The request might come with a crafty bait-and-switch, to determine where your time is open:

PWNHN: *“We’re meeting on Thursday about next year’s outreach.”*

YOU: *“Well, I’ve two other meetings that day. It’s a shame — I’m free next week.”*

PWNHN: *“Great! Next week we’re starting our volunteer list!”*

How to Fight It: Avoid TMI about your free time

See what happened? The first request asked for a specific day.

You said no and offered a different time, so the PWNHN pounced right on it.

We sometimes buttress a 'no' with excuses or rationales.

This is why PWNHN's are persistent — they know we'll refuse a request only if we absolutely have to.

What works? Be a little vague:

"Let me check...when would I be needed?"

This forces the asker to give you specifics and to respect your open time as "unavailable."



Technique 3: Anchoring (“So how many hours can I put you down for?”)

How it works:

This slick move is honed by charity boards to campaign for time and money. People ask for something by assuming you’ll say ‘yes’; it’s just a matter of how much you’ll part with.

With this move, the PWNHN cleverly counts you in before you agree to anything. *“Most members volunteer 6 hours; can I put you down for 4?”*

Reliable, organized women are often hot targets for anchoring. PWNHNs know we often handle 20 things at once and can be trusted to volunteer whenever we’re asked.



How to Fight It: Don't get caught by surprise

So what if you're on their list — that doesn't mean they get to control your time.

Deflect their suggestion:

"Please don't put me down yet; that week might be full. I'll let you know."

Anchoring is often used as a sales strategy (and it's proven to work) by convincing people they already agreed to buy in. If you're not sure you can afford the time, don't let the PWNHN fool you.



Technique 4: The Flattery Express **(“But you’re our best team member!”)**

How it works:

When we support a cause, we always give 100%. So the PWNHN knows to ask in a way that’s impossible to refuse by laying on the flattery:

“You’re the best chairwoman we’ve got!”

This approach plays on our conscience and our sense of pride. It’s hard not to feel great when told you’re the best at something.

How to Fight It: Avoid being blinded by flattery

Here's where your leadership skills come in. If you don't have time to devote to a project you previously led, admit it. Explain that work or family situations have changed, and you've got to decline.

Then, delegate. Offer to train someone to take over.

This way, your “No, I can't this time,” turns into a contribution:

“But I'll teach someone else the ropes.”

Saying no to people who never seem to hear it involves tact, grace and a bit of savvy. When we do it wisely, we hold the power to protect our time.

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