

Ask the expert How to say no

In our careers, saying no is an important skill but it can be challenging. By understanding the stages of defiance, you can align your actions with your values and build the confidence to say no when necessary.

Use 5 stages of defiance to build confidence in saying no



1. Identify the tension

Tension between what's expected and what's right can manifest as unease or physical symptoms like a dry mouth or headaches.

🔗 What are your tension warning signs?



"Defiance is simply acting in alignment with your values, where there is pressure to do otherwise. It's a skillset that's necessary & available to us all."

[Dr. Sunita Sah, expert in defiance and decision-making](#)

2. Acknowledge the tension

Pausing and acknowledging the tension you feel is crucial because it can signal misalignment with your values. Ask yourself:

🔗 Who am I? Reflect on your values and how they influence your decisions.

🔗 What kind of situation is this? Think about the costs of not defying.

🔗 What would someone like me do here?

4. Express non compliance

Clearly state that you don't think you can proceed or that you're not comfortable with the situation.

Try:

🔗 Preparing a few phrases to use when you need to express non-compliance. e.g. "I'm not comfortable with this" or "I can do that but I need more time"

3. Vocalise the tension

Express your discomfort or ask questions to address the situation.

Try:

🔗 Using clarifying questions like, "What do you mean by that?" or "Can you clarify this?"

🔗 Practicing defiance by visualising likely scenarios or role-playing with a friend.

5. Act of defiance

Take action that aligns with your values. This act, though risky, can lead to positive outcomes.

🔗 Reflect on past experiences where you successfully said no: what were the positive outcomes?

🔗 Apply a filter to determine if it's the right time to defy: does the action feel right, safe, and effective enough?

Coach yourself questions

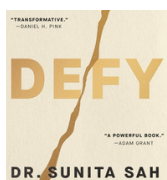
When have I successfully said no in the past?



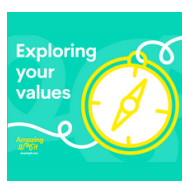
How can I say no in a way that feels authentic to me?



Recommended resources



Defy: The Power of No in a World that Demands Yes
by Dr. Sunita Sah



Download our free values tool
for five exercises to help you explore your values.

Episode 387

How to cage your confidence gremlins



Sarah and Helen discuss how to cage your confidence gremlins (the beliefs that hold us back) in episode **#387** of Squiggly Careers.