A close-up, high-angle photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes and mouth. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the texture of her skin and the color of her lips. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The
Art
of
Saying
No

MARLENE
WAGNER

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By Marlene Wagner

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Indicators You Need Healthy Personal Boundaries

You think you have boundaries, **but they don't seem to be working.**

Working with people for years, I've learned many people have never heard the term boundaries.

*If they have, **they don't have a clue how even to establish boundaries.***

You still feel people are taking advantage of you.

Your self-esteem is taking constant hits, and the criticism is unending.

Chances are, you need to take a hard look at your boundaries. **The ones that used to work don't anymore.**

Perhaps what you thought was a boundary wasn't, or it wasn't solidly in place.

We are constantly changing, and you aren't the same person anymore.

It's time for you to take a look at and evaluate those boundaries. How can they be improved **or be more effective?**

You can not only strengthen the boundaries you have but make them healthier at the same time.

What are warning signs that your boundaries need work?

- When someone bullies you, and you stay silent.
- You agree to things you don't agree with (such as political opinions) to avoid **'rocking the boat.'**

- You suffer from guilt anytime you do something for yourself.
- You feel invisible.
- **You often say 'yes' even when you want to say 'no'** when people ask you to do things.
- **You do all the giving** in your relationships.
- You give people your time **who don't deserve it.**
- When someone is in your personal space, you don't say anything, despite **how uncomfortable you feel.**
- You don't speak up when the joke isn't funny - and it's at your expense.
- People bully you, but you do nothing about it.
- **You're always playing the victim.**
- People take you for granted.
- You worry all the time about **what people think of you.**
- When someone tells you to 'do something for yourself,' you have no idea what to do.
- **You over-share** when talking to others about yourself.
- You take on other people's guilt as though that will absolve them somehow.
- **You're in a career chosen for you** (such as working in a family business you had no desire to be part of) rather than in one that you want.
- You don't speak up when someone touches you physically, even though you don't want to be touched.
- **You wind up in relationships with controlling individuals.**
- You see yourself as the 'sacrifice.'
- You feel like **people won't like you if you don't do things for them.**
- You use actions as currency with people by doing things to someday do something for you in return. **That day never comes.**
- **You manipulate people** to get your needs met
- Reading this list is making you uncomfortable. You've recognized more than one thing on it that sounds like you.

It's an extreme and daunting list. There are no boundary indicators here what's so ever.

The good news is, is you can change.

Boundaries are a must to have healthy relationships.

Healthy boundaries are crucial to your development into the individual you've always meant to become.

By checking your boundaries periodically, **you will see areas needing work.**

You'll also see where you can do things **to keep them strong and healthy** to serve you going forward.

It might seem like a lot of effort, but don't you think you're worth it?

It's time to get down to work.

5 Strategies for Guarding Your Personal Boundaries

Imagine an **invisible fence set around yourself**, with a single gate shut and locked, with **only you in possession of the key**.

How does that make you feel?

When we have good personal boundaries, then we've set a space around us that we control.

We tell those around us they can go only so far and no further. **It's up to us to open the gate, and we get to decide who comes in.**

However, the world has a way of pushing against that fence.

Prepare for the pushback you will receive from others. People resist change and won't like the new rules you're putting in place.

*It's especially true if **you've never had boundaries, and now you do**. The people in your life will be caught off guard.*

Here is where you'll get the resistance and pushback. You've changed, and they don't like it.

They want that person back they could take advantage of. Don't be surprised they will dig in their heels to get their way and get the old you back.

There will always be people who want more of your time, more of your energy. More of you.

Thankfully there are things **you can do to guard** those boundaries and keep them strong.

1. Identify your limits.

It's impossible to guard what you haven't even defined. The trick here is to **define those limits clearly** and succinctly.

For example, you might want to protect some time with your family. But a boundary **too vague is impossible to defend**.

By clarifying the goal down to "Saturdays are family time," then you know what you're protecting **(time with your family)**.

When things come up on Saturday that does not involve the family, it's suddenly not difficult to say no.

2. Be straightforward.

Never let someone push your boundaries without your permission. When it does happen, take direct and clear action immediately.

Anytime your boundaries are threatened, it's time to open a dialogue with the violator.

That allows you to **verbally reset the boundary in a way that makes it clear** to the other person that the limitation is there.

3. Pay attention to your feelings.

If you're **feeling** like someone is violating your boundaries, try to clarify those feeling and the circumstances causing them.

Go with your gut instinct here as you analyze your emotions.

*Once you learn how to listen to the **gut**, it's the most significant indicator of being aware of and looking at closely.*

Your gut will never steer you wrong.

What you're sensing is likely a **boundary violation** that you need to address.

4. Speak up.

When you feel like your boundaries are being violated, **you need to say something.**

The best guard challenges all intruders.

Being assertive now will save you a lot of heartache and problems down the road later.

5. Remind yourself that you have a right to set boundaries.

Sometimes our boundaries have grown weak because we don't feel like we have a right to set them in the first place.

Permitting yourself to set **the boundary will immediately strengthen it again.**

Guarding your boundaries is **an essential part of living a life** that's not only healthy and happy but meaningful.

Self-confident, strong people have solid boundaries that they protect.

Protecting your boundaries is one of the most effective tools you have toward realizing a happy and productive life.

6 Steps to Establishing and sticking to Healthy Boundaries

Imagine a life where you call the shots—a life in balance, **where you dictate how you use your time and resources.**

Where **no one can manipulate you** or take advantage of you.

Imagine life with healthy personal boundaries.

Boundaries are those invisible lines we draw around ourselves that keep us from harm.

The **barriers that no one can cross without our permission.** Boundaries are what keeps us in control.

How do you get them?

More importantly, how do you keep them once you've put them in place?

- 1. Decide.** Sit down and consciously make the decision that **you deserve to have boundaries.**

You need them for the sake of your future mental and physical health.

Making this decision will free you to pursue a life of change and possibilities.

- 2. Create.** It's time to rewrite the script.

The next step is to think about the ways that you've been taken advantage of.

From there, **make a concrete list of ways in which you want it to change.**

What are the new boundaries that you're establishing?

What do you hope to accomplish? In creating this list, you're going to give yourself a roadmap to change.

- 3. Share.** Once you have that list, let the world in on it. None of your friends or coworkers are going to be **mind-readers.**

If you want them to respect your boundaries, you need to let them know what and where they are.

Will all these discussions go well? Probably not.

Everyone is different. Some people have been taking advantage of you and **do not want things to change.**

*Expect the pushback mentioned earlier. Here's where to stand firm and do **not allow anyone to intimidate you.***

- 4. Practice.** Change doesn't come overnight, and some of those behaviors you're trying to break **are well ingrained by now.**

As with any habit, you're not going to have success every single day, so **cut yourself some slack** when that happens.

That's why you need to **go back and reinforce what you're doing through constant vigilance and practice.**

5. **Gratitude.** As you go about changing, **thank those making a solid effort to be supportive of your new boundaries.**

A little gratitude will go a long way and help reinforce those boundaries with the people who matter most.

Keep in mind that many of those same people have boundary issues.

Respect their boundaries as you would have them respect yours.

6. **Relax.** Remember to have a certain amount of flexibility for when things go wrong.

You'll need to have a great deal of patience **as you explore these new boundaries and get them set firmly in place.**

Most of all, **believe you can do it.** We tend to set ourselves up for success or failure entirely by the attitudes that we embrace.

If you want to establish and stick to healthy boundaries, **you need the sincere faith of an individual who knows you will succeed. You can do this!**

Boundaries to Build Your Self-Confidence

The one element in your life that **can increase your self-confidence** is setting boundaries and implementing healthy relationships.

Boundaries are the imaginary lines that we put in place to protect our minds, emotions, and bodies.

They keep us from being manipulated or controlled by others and to enjoy our lives more.

Personal boundaries **enable us to take control of our own lives** and build healthy relationships with others.

Without them, it's unlikely you will live a happy life because you're sacrificing parts of yourself to please others.

Weak or no personal boundaries can chip away at your self-confidence because you feel helpless.

Unable to speak up and do something about the situations and relationships you have.

Some ways to know if your boundaries are weak include:

- **You can't say "No."** You get trapped in situations that you don't want to be in. Because you want to be accepted or because you feel obligated.
- **You can't stand up for yourself.** When someone is mistreating or disrespecting you, it's your right and duty to stand up and object – and demand better treatment.
- **You are going against your values.** One way of pleasing others is to do their bidding.

- If you go against your values to please others, your self-esteem becomes eroded.
- **You are taking on too much responsibility.** You need to give some thought if a request is essential or valuable to you.

We often take on responsibilities that become a drain on our time and energy.

- **You are accommodating others too much.** You let your responsibilities go so that you can take care of others' needs.
- You will begin to feel resentful.
- **Unable to communicate your wants and needs.** When you lack self-confidence, it's challenging to open up to those in your closest relationships.
- It's a sign that personal boundaries are necessary for you to meet your needs and wants.

Weak or non-existent personal boundaries erode your self-respect both for yourself and from others.

You may seem needy and quickly **taken advantage of because you're insecure** in everything you do.

Ironically, when you begin to set boundaries and stand up for yourself, you'll gain the respect and love you always wanted from others.

People admire strength and determination, and taking care of your needs first can foster that admiration.

You are setting boundaries, and **standing up for what you believe and want** will seem very unnatural at first.

You worry about losing relationships in the process – but as you continue developing and implementing the boundaries, **you'll feel more empowered**.

Keep in mind that you're not unloving or difficult to get along with when you enforce your boundaries.

You're taking care of yourself.

Increase Your Energy Level by Setting Boundaries

There are many reasons your energy levels may be low.

Sometimes, it is because we haven't set or enforced our boundaries. People are taking advantage of your time.

Sometimes, **certain people, we're around can drain us of our energy and leave us tired and frustrated.** Yet, we continue to let these people into our lives.

Here is a list of suggestions for setting boundaries and regaining some of your lost energy:

1. **List some relationships which you know to drain your energy.**

A relationship is draining your energy because you let the other person cross a boundary that was important to you.

It may **be your fault that you didn't enforce** the boundary initially and are now paying the price.

2. **Do you feel obligated to do something rather than passionate about it?**

When you've committed to something you don't want to do, it can drain your energy.

Try and pinpoint whether you're **accepting a task or situation because you feel obligated** or do you genuinely want to do it.

3. **Become aware of when a relationship crosses a boundary.**

Sometimes you may not notice when a boundary is being crossed because **it hasn't happened before.**

For example, if someone is late meeting you once – but it continues to happen frequently – **that's a red flag that you're being taken advantage.**

Draw the line with the person and tell them what behavior you expect.

4. **Note the people and activities which drain your energy – and also those which energize you.**

You may have accepted a person into your life or joined an activity that drains your energy.

Make a note of it, **get out of the relationship or situation, and set a clear boundary** so it never happens again.

5. **Make a note of why you sometimes resort to bad behavior.**

If you suddenly feel a compulsion to binge out on food, alcohol, or whatever, numb your feelings.

Note **who you were with at the time** or what you were doing.

Set an appropriate boundary for the person or situation and try not to let it happen again.

6. **Be clear about what your life would look like if you were energized and didn't have people or situations to interfere with that energy level.**

Think about what you'd be doing and accomplishing if you didn't have the "energy drainers" that you have now.

What boundaries would need to be set in place for those energy-draining situations and people to go away?

Getting the big picture **can be the catalyst you need** for a life better lived with boundaries.

Without energy, your life can feel dark and lonely, and you'll be doing things you don't want to do for the rest of your life.

It takes well-developed boundaries to guard that energy and make it work for you.

4 Health Benefits of Saying No

It's so easy to say 'yes' to things. But is it good for you?

The problem with being agreeable is straightforward, and you quickly find yourself way over your head.

Too much 'yes' means you're swamped with work, your weekends are always overbooked, and **you never have a moment to yourself.**

While the following makes for a hilarious montage in the movie "27 Dresses," – It's not so funny in real life.

Here is what it looks like.

One woman is a bridesmaid for two different weddings the same evening and spends the night chasing back and forth between receptions.

In real life, it's not so funny.

This kind of **over-commitment can be downright damaging** to your health.

1. Your self-image suffers.

When you find yourself doing too much, ***you wind up in a spiral.***

You start blaming yourself when it turns out you can't do everything well.

Never mind the fact that **you can't do everything and still do a good job at it.** You also **start feeling more and more like a failure** with each missed deadline.

It leads to negative self-talk and, eventually, some serious long-term damage to your mental health.

2. You experience higher anxiety.

When there are not enough hours in the day, you find yourself frantic and always 'putting out fires.'

This kind of anxiety is exhausting, not to mention it can lead to the world of panic attacks if left untended.

3. You're more at risk for depression.

When you don't say 'no' to things you don't want to do, you'll find a lack of enthusiasm for the project.

After a while, a bleak mood and even **depression will overtake** you trying to work on that project.

The long-term prognosis isn't good – *untreated depression might even eventually lead to suicidal ideas.*

4. You become resentful of the project.

You'll also resent the people who asked you to join that project in the first place.

This kind of resentment **festers and can even damage your relationships** with others leading to anxiety and depression.

5. It's exhausting.

When you're involved in something you'd rather not be doing, **it wears on the entire body,**

You start feeling tired, leading to physical exhaustion.

People can experience **heart palpitations and other physical symptoms** when they repeatedly run themselves into the ground.

Looking at all of that, it's not hard to see what the health benefits of saying no are.

Saying 'no' puts the control back in your hands, leading to more confidence and a better self-image.

By keeping yourself out of projects you'd rather not be doing, **you avoid a whole host of problems.**

It reduces stress and anxiety. You'll sleep better at night and be more rested.

You'll be open and alert for those projects that you wanted to do in the first place.

With all that on the line? **Saying 'no' becomes easy.**

How to Say No to People You Can't Say No To

You're overworked, overbooked, and overtired. You're so busy there's not another thing to you can say yes.

The world hasn't gotten the memo yet that *you're unavailable*.

Suddenly **you've got someone you really can't say 'no' to** asking you to can take on one more thing.

What do you do?

Sadly, there's a whole slew of people in our lives that it's **nearly impossible** to say 'no' to, including:

- Your boss
- Coworkers
- Clients
- Friends
- Family

Luckily **there's a solution** for each of them.

Your Boss

With your boss, more than any other person on this list, it's near impossible to say 'no' too.

It's the **person responsible for your paycheck!**

The solution here relies on rewriting the script.

How?

By not saying 'no' at all.

Instead, **remind them how much work you have and ask about their priorities.**

They may have forgotten what they've already given you.

They might want to or rework your existing workload entirely. **Ask if that could be an option.**

Coworkers

There's a dynamic you can't deny when it comes to **your work associates.**

You want to help them because down the road, and you might need them to help you.

The problem is, you indeed **might not have the time right now** for one more project.

In this case, ***honesty is your best friend***. Just let them know that you'd love to help, but you're swamped.

Most people will understand. After all, they've been there themselves.

Clients

The last thing you want to do is lose a client.

If you're already overbooked, it might be that you really don't have time to take on the project.

We tend to say yes out of fear and then wind up not being able to give the task our best efforts.

In this case, you need diplomacy. Regretfully decline, **but also let them know that you'd take the job if you could.**

Also, realize you can't give them the quality they deserve if you do. If you're good at your job? They'll be back.

Friends

The great thing about friends is that they're already inclined to be understanding when you have to say 'no.'

The trick here is to be brief – *just let them know that you can't take part in whatever they're suggesting.*

Leave it at that. Long explanations will make you seem insincere.

Family

A family obligation can be the hardest thing to get out of.

That's because **your family knows just how to push your buttons** and aren't afraid to do so to get their way.

To deal with family members, you need to show your confidence.

Be polite. Be firm. And hold your ground.

You might have to dig your heels in a little, but in the end, you'll be glad you did.

We don't have to let the **people in our lives control our actions.**

Saying 'no' is not only possible – but necessary sometimes for your peace of mind.

You can do it! ***It's all just a matter of saying 'no.'***

Strategies for Saying No to Pushy People

There's always someone who won't take 'no' for an answer.

How you handle pushy people is the difference between keeping your sanity or becoming hopelessly overbooked.

What follows are some tips for managing even the pushiest of individuals.

1. Be firm.

Then continue being firm, as many times as necessary.

If the person you're talking to keeps pushing, then change the subject. Or better yet, walk away.

2. Buy some time.

Rather than say 'yes' or 'no' right away, **say that you need some space to consider the matter.**

Then take the time you need to make an informed decision.

By taking the time to think about things independently, you're not pressured by a sales pitch or an urgency to decide.

It puts the control back where it belongs – in your hands.

3. When saying 'no' to one thing, find something so you can say yes

Find an alternative to what you're being asked to do, something with less of a commitment that interests you.

And when all else fails? Remember the rules to saying 'no' and then stick to them:

- **Hold the course** – If you're not firm in your answer, you can't be expected to be taken seriously.

A confident tone is all the difference between having your answer accepted for what it is and being pressured to change your mind.

- **Be clear in what you mean.** Here's where you need to watch your language.

Saying things the wrong way can lead to confusion or even the thought that you intend to revisit the decision when you mean a solid 'no.'

- **Don't offer excuses.** Don't spend time apologizing or give lengthy reasons why you can't do something.

Keep your words brief. You don't have to say anything more than a simple 'no' – long explanations not necessary.

- **Prioritize.** Take a hard look at your time and decide if what you're asked to do is how you wish to be spending it.

Then convey this – clearly – that you do not have room in your schedule for something new.

- **Learn how to set boundaries.** If you're still having trouble saying 'no,' you need to do some work on your limits.

Resolving this will take deliberate effort and dedication.

In some cases, **talking to a counselor might be necessary to guide you on your journey to saying 'no.'**

Do not be afraid to ask for help!

You can't allow pushy people to rule your life.

Remember, saying **'no' gets easier with practice.** So don't beat yourself up if you falter along the way.

Keep at it, and in no time, even the pushiest of people won't be able to convince you to do something you have no desire to do.

Stress Relief and Saying No

Stress has become the byword in the medical community.

Stress is taking the blame for everything from obesity, heart disease, hypertension, and a hundred other conditions.

Anytime we can reduce stress, it's a good thing.

Believe it or not, the easiest way to remove stress from your life lies in the ability *to say one simple word: "No."*

How do you know when to say 'no'?

- 1. Ask yourself what value saying 'yes' holds for you.** Chances are, saying 'yes' is going to involve a commitment of some kind.

How would saying 'yes' affect other commitments?

By saying 'yes' now are you going to have to say 'no' to something else later? Is this important enough for you to turn down something else?

What will you gain by saying yes? What would you lose?

A careful examination of your life will tell you if this is worthwhile or not.

- *A 'yes' should enhance your happiness OR*
- *A 'yes' should advance your career OR*
- *A 'yes' should have a positive impact on something you believe deeply*

Anything else, **ask yourself very seriously just why you're saying 'yes.'** A yes without value is guaranteed to cause you stress.

2. **Ask yourself what 'yes' is going to do to your current stress levels.** By saying yes are you going to increase those stress levels?

If so, by how much? **Stress is inherent in life.**

Taking on any new project is going to cause at least a little bit of stress.

However, **there is a big difference between the anxiety of a minor deadline and a nervous breakdown.**

If you've taken the project no one else is taking seriously or is working on at all. *What stress level will you experience*

If you can't live with the added stress, then it's time to say 'no.'

3. **Are you feeling guilty about this decision?** If so, head for the hills.

Anytime you agree to something out of guilt, you've got stress in spades. And it's only going to get worse.

Take a pass – and then tell any residual guilt to get lost. It's not your problem.

4. **Give it time.** If you're not sure about saying 'yes,' then tell the person asking that you want to sleep on it.

By giving yourself extra time, **you can consider the pros and cons** of saying 'yes.'

Try to get a handle on just how much stress you'd be adding to your life by agreeing.

Time gives distance, gives you a clearer view of a situation, and **makes it easier to say 'no' if it isn't going to work out.**

The takeaway from this?

Too much stress in your life already means it's time to look for some opportunities to say 'no.' Even to things to you've previously said 'yes.'

You know yourself better than anyone else will. Protect your peace of mind – and your health – by learning when and how to say 'no.'

5 Things to Remember When You Need to Say No

Sometimes saying 'no' is the hardest thing in the world.

Why?

Because from the time we're small, we're raised with the expectation that saying 'no' is somehow wrong.

We're labeled stubborn or uncooperative. Or we're not a 'team player.'

You **can't say yes to everything** – at least not without driving yourself crazy.

Being agreeable can lead to astronomical stress, *which impacts not just how you live your life, but your health in general.*

How do you say 'no' when you've been hard-wired to 'yes'?

1. **'No' makes you a priority.** We all only get 24 hours in a day, and you will spend some of that sleeping.

What you do with the remainder of the day is important. You don't have the resources to say yes to everyone.

You have to decide whether a project is worth your time – or if that time might be better spent doing something else.

2. **'No' isn't a rejection.** Because you're turning down a project doesn't mean you're somehow negating the person who did the asking.

Saying no to your best friend doesn't make them any less your best friend.

And yes, you can even say no to your boss.

If you're already overburdened or in something you perceive to be more important, **you can say 'no' to a boss.**

The thing to remember is that it's always wise to help the other person make that distinction.

Telling your boss 'No' **might be a risky endeavor** unless you first help them realize why it is you can't.

- 3. Not every 'No' has to be a solid no.** Sometimes a compromise might be in order.

It could be that you don't have the time to chair the committee, but you still can serve.

It doesn't mean **that you should find a compromise for everything asked to do** if something piques your attention.

Is there's some way you can be involved without putting in the total commitment? Especially if you're already busy with something else.

- 4. 'No' doesn't come with a guilt trip.** There's no harm in someone asking for your help with something, and you always have the equal right to say no.

It's part of the give and takes of daily life.

If you've considered the request seriously and felt that saying 'no' was the right thing for you to do – then go with your gut. Say no.

- 5. Nor does 'No' come with an apology.** The moment you say you're sorry, you're showing that you're wavering and putting yourself in a position of weakness.

Your no means no. That's it. You don't need to make long excuses or even give a reason why.

A polite response of, "**Thanks for asking, but I can't help with that,**" is **genuinely all you need to say.**

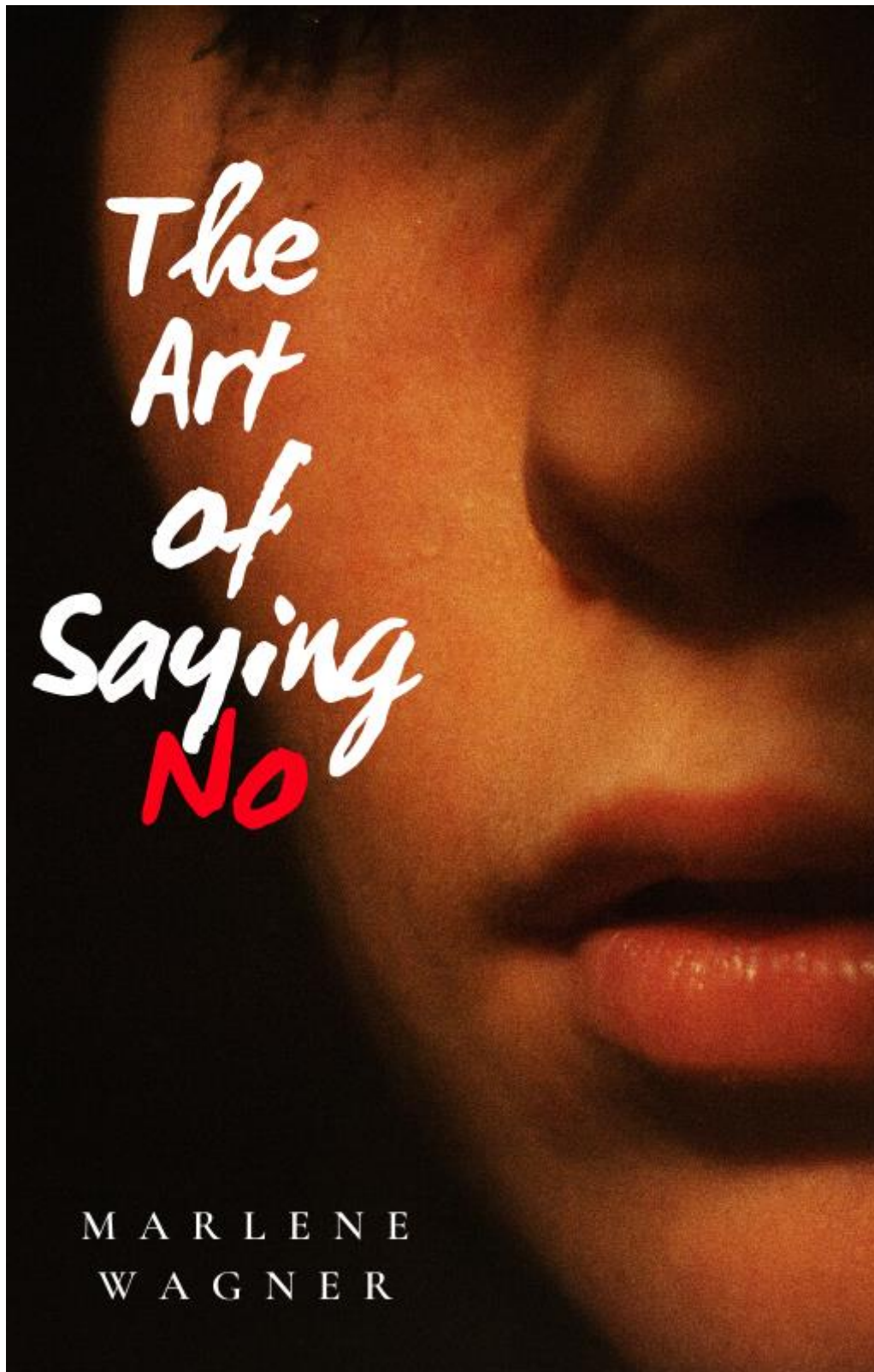
'No' doesn't have to be daunting or even scary, but it does have the ability to save your sanity.

Learn how to use 'no' effectively, and your life will become infinitely easier.

Thankfully it's an easy skill to learn. It really is as simple as saying 'no.'

FURTHER READING

- 1. Free Chapter Building Self-Confidence**
<https://park-avenue-unlimited.ck.page/61bf8da788>
- 2. How to Look, Act, And Project Self Confidence**
<https://wp.me/p7UeWp-ie>
- 3. Boost Your Confidence**
<https://wp.me/p7UeWp-ij>
- 4. A Guide to Develop Your Self-Confidence**
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- 6. Free E-book Top TIPS Projecting Confidence**
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