

## Too Much Distance: Learning to Say “Yes” in Relationships

**Why is it important to say “yes”?** It means connecting with others. It is a way of recognizing that we are all human and all need social contact. It is a healthy way of respecting your role as part of a larger community. It means becoming known to others.

### SITUATIONS WHERE YOU CAN LEARN TO SAY “YES”

- ◆ Asking someone out for coffee.
  - ◆ Telling your therapist how you *really* feel.
  - ◆ Asking someone for a favor.
  - ◆ Joining a club or organization.
  - ◆ Calling a hotline.
  - ◆ Being vulnerable about your “weak” feelings.
  - ◆ Letting people get to know you.
  - ◆ Soothing “young” parts of yourself.
- ★ *Any others that you notice? Write them on the back of the page.*

### EXAMPLES: SAYING “YES” IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND PTSD

	<i>With Others</i>	<i>With Yourself</i>
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	“I am having a drug craving—please help talk me through it.”	“I can give myself treats that are healthy rather than destructive.”
	“Please come with me to an AA meeting.”	“I will try speaking at an AA meeting.”
<b>PTSD</b>	“I need your help—I am scared.”	“I need to reach out to people when I’m upset.”
	“I would like you to call and check in on me to see if I’m okay.”	“I can start creating healthy friendships step by step.”

### HOW TO SAY “YES”

\* **Try different ways:**

- *Share an activity:* “Would you like to go to a movie with me?”
- *Say how you feel:* “I feel so alone; it is hard for me to talk about this.”
- *Focus on the other person:* “Tell me about your struggles with cocaine.”
- *Watch how others do it:* Go to a gathering and listen to others relate.

\* **Plan for rejection.** Everyone gets rejected at times. It is a normal part of life. Let go of that person and move on to someone else who might be available.

\* **Practice in advance, if possible.** Therapy may be a safe place to rehearse.

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\* **Choose safe people.** Select people who are friendly and supportive.

\* **Know that it's normal to make mistakes along the way.** It will feel uncomfortable to reach out to others at first. Allow yourself room to grow—it will get easier over time.

\* **Set goals.** Keep yourself moving forward by making a clear plan, just as you would in other areas of your life. Decide to make one social call a week, or try one new meeting a week.

\* **Recognize that you may feel very “young.”** Parts of you may feel vulnerable, like a child who is just learning how to relate to people. That is expected, as parts of you may not have had a chance to develop due to PTSD or substance abuse.

\* **Start small.** Start with a simple event (e.g., saying hello or smiling) rather than a huge one (e.g., asking someone out on a date).

\* **Notice what you have in common rather than how you are different.** Work hard to see your similarities with others; this can make it easier to connect.

### **ROLE PLAYS FOR SAYING “YES”**

★ *Try rehearsing the following situations out loud.*

#### **With Others**

- You talk about your impulse to hurt yourself *before* doing it.
- You ask someone at work to go to lunch.
- You tell your therapist you missed her when she was away on vacation.
- You call your sponsor when you feel like drinking.
- You tell someone, “I love you.”
- You tell someone how alone you feel.
- You admit a weakness to someone.
- You talk to your friend honestly about your anger at him.
- It is 4:00 A.M. and you are so depressed you can't sleep. Whom can you call?
- The weekend is coming and you have no plans with anyone. What can you do?

#### **With Yourself**

- You feel scared; how can you soothe yourself?
- You have worked hard; how can you give yourself a safe treat?
- Part of you (“the child within”) feels hurt. How can you talk to that part?
- You are angry at yourself for failing a test. How can you forgive yourself?