WHAT CAN I DO WHEN I NEED TO SAY NO BUT I'M SCARED OF UPSETTING SOMEONE?

www.AnxietyHelpBox.com

A clear, respectful no is often kinder than a yes you can't sustain.

1 Buy yourself a moment

"Let me check and get back to you." You don't have to decide while someone is waiting for an answer.

2 Check your real capacity

Would saying yes mean losing needed rest, time or money? Decide before you start managing their feelings.

3 Use a short no

A brief reason is optional. You don't need a long speech to justify yourself.

4 Offer less only if you want to

Don't offer an alternative you can't manage.

5 Repeat without adding excuses

You can acknowledge disappointment without changing your answer.

6 Let the answer stand

Pause before sending a guilty follow-up that turns your no into yes. Their feelings can be real without deciding for you.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

You can be warm, respectful and unavailable at the same time.

WHEN TO GET SUPPORT

If saying no could lead to threats or harm, seek private support and plan for safety rather than testing the boundary alone.

A clear no can protect an honest yes.

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I Need to Say No but I’m Scared of Upsetting Someone

A one-page saying no and people-pleasing support sheet gives practical reminders for setting boundaries without feeling obliged to over-explain. It covers pausing for time to decide, checking capacity, giving a brief refusal, offering only realistic alternatives, and repeating an answer when needed.

Teenagers, adults and young people who fear upsetting friends, family members, classmates or colleagues may find it useful to print and keep for difficult conversations. It can support role-play in counselling, pastoral sessions or at home, helping users prepare short assertive responses and remember that another person’s disappointment does not have to change their decision.