

Life Notes

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No Buts Just “Yes, and....”

By Bonnie Henriksen, Life Coach, Trainer & Group Facilitator

It's common in our language to respond to an issue or suggestion with “Yes, but....” We think the negative or question the logic before we accept the positive of an idea. This month, I share a tool called “Yes, and....” The idea of “Yes, and...” is to encourage individuals to see positives. Here are examples of how it works:

You have conversation with a family member about how you'll spend your fall vacation. Your partner says, “Let's go up the North Shore.” You think the weather along Lake Superior in the fall is chilly and downright nasty. You would rather do something cosmopolitan, take in museums and fine dining, or include something physically challenging. You want to tell your partner, “No, but I don't want to go up the North Shore. I don't like that idea.” and begin whining your excuses.

With the “Yes and...” technique, you cannot use the words “no” or “but.” Each sentence must start with “Yes, and...” and continue with an option you'd be willing to compromise at or offer as an add-on. Your reply might be:

“Yes, and we could go into Canada and return through Winnipeg. We could take in a few museums and great restaurants in a big city!” Another option might be: “Yes, and we could ride the gondolas and hike the Superior Trail. Hopefully, your partner will catch the “Yes, and...” concept and join in offering a reply like “Ya, and I read about a show in Grand Marais the second weekend of October. Let's go then, and take in the show.” You answer, “Yes and I'd like to hunt for agates along Lake Superior if there's a nice afternoon.”

You get the drift. Suddenly, both of you are engaged in a positive conversation each offering suggestions to a plan that serves you both.

“Yes and...” works in parenting teenagers. It sends a different message to your teen when you say “Yes” and offer what is possible than when you challenge his need for independence with a flat out “No!” “No” precipitates defiance and starts a test of wills. You empower the teen with what you trust him with and respect him for. He feels part of the decision making process. You can intentionally design this way of conversing with your teenagers before springing it on them. Explain the rules:

“No buts. Start a sentence with ‘yes’ and offer a possibility. We'll each offer a positive option for the subject in question.” For example:

“Mom, can I go out with the guys after the game?”

“Yes, be safe and be home by 11:00.”

“But, Mom...”

“Son, the rule is no ‘buts’.”

“Okay, so yes, and can Jake come over after and watch a movie?”

“Yes, and remember you work in the morning so finish up at a reasonable time.”

“Yes, and...” works for resolving issues in the workplace too, dissipating conflict, goal setting, designing projects, planning work schedules, etc. Teams of two or more can use it. In some cases, it works to clarify the technique and explain the rules beforehand. In other cases, you may be able to incorporate it in your half of the conversation and see an impact. I have a coaching friend who had a long-time issue with a family member. When the final straw broke the camel's back, she used the technique first to talk herself through what she was willing to accept from the family member and what she wasn't. Then she used it as her half of the conversation with the family member. Before long, they were both compromising on the issue and worked through it! Frustration that had built for years dissolved as they each offered what was possible for them.

It's fun for me as a life coach to see simple techniques like “Yes, and...” make huge differences in the lives of my clients. What difference can “yes” make in your life this month? Test “Yes, and...” Let me know how it works for you. I'd love to hear your stories!

It's nice chatting with you. If you'd like to learn more about life coaching & discovering a more compelling life, call me at 218-327-2691 or visit my website at www.lifesongcoaching.com. We'll make a plan!



Life Notes is a monthly submission to the Floodwood, MN, **Northern Independent**, and a newsletter to Life Song Coaching clients & potential clients. Contact Bonnie Henriksen, CPCC, at the above web address to request future copies of *Life Notes*.