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Summary: Success at both work and love enhance each other. The necessary negotiation and communication skills lead to success in both the bedroom and the boardroom. One of the most important skills involves keeping promises, especially the commitment to oneself that comes with the power of a positive "No." One also needs external feedback to really Know Thyself. It is possible to create an effective and dignified work family integration if not balance. Specific "must" suggestions are offered by the author, an executive, family and divorce coach.

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Men and Women *can* have Success at *both* Love and Work[©]

Part 1: The Positive (self and couple preserving) "NO."

By Shel J. Miller, Ph.D.

At the office, Dad is the brilliant technical problem-solver and master of efficiency. Mom is a most competent manager with “extraordinary” people skills. It gets loud at home some times. No patience. No humor. As the common complaint goes, they “just can’t communicate.” Behind closed bed or board room doors, there is no safe haven. Though work seems like a good place to hide. Where's the hope?

In re-discovering the simple power of direct person to person honest dialogue.

How do you generally respond -- assuming you do -- when your spouse or colleague mentions some good news? Successful partners, upon hearing good news, capitalize. This is the term used by Shelly Gable, the UCLA psychologist, who researches what makes a relationship great. That is, they give a “Constructive/Active” response to her sharing. So Gable creates another important meaning for the both work and family life when she denotes *capitalization* as “amplifying the pleasure of the good situation and contributing to an upward spiral of positive emotion.” Such Capitalization responses are the key to building strong relationships. Empathic listening must be demonstrated to be empathic. **Respondingsomewhat accurately** to what you've heard is a turn on.

At work, leaders need to be “in touch” with their subordinates. Being a **servant** leader, a Johnny- on- the- spot may work better than the traditionally distant, **charismatic** type of leader. **Servant** leaders cheerfully support and bring out the best in everyone around them by saying, “Yes”

whenever possible or a necessary “No” in a caring dignified manner. Can you take the time to listen and figure out what the person really wants and needs? Then support that person appropriately whenever possible. Look for and praise whatever is particularly laudable in his/her performance, for example, to increase a sense of self-worth and self-esteem when necessary.

Research by Russell Reynolds Associates, the global recruiting firm, found 95% of institutional investors in six leading countries saying that CEOs should emphasize long-term, not short-term, performance. According to Charles Tribbett III, the firm's managing director and a co-author of the survey, the results highlight a widespread desire for humbler CEOs than the brash and youthful leaders who came to define the Internet boom. For example, instead of claiming personal success for a turnaround, this new kind of chief executive will praise his employees and, in good times and bad, share the spotlight with other members of the C-Suite¹ i.e. those "reasonable" hires or partners.

We create and coordinate our sane life strategies through declarations, assessments, assertions, requests, and promises ("yes, I will," or "no, I will not") in our verbal and nonverbal language. Words do a great deal more than simply describe reality. Our Language is action – action that creates a successful leader or a vulnerable insultee. Conversations that lead to new learning create chemical changes in our brain. Well-expressed distinctions in language create possibility moods such as hope, pride, serenity or appreciation. The negative correlate moods -- resignation, shame, fear or resentment -- beget struggle and decrease possibility thinking.

To develop these positive moods, one of the highest priorities is creating clear boundary marking. Eliminate chronic struggles over rule making, limit setting and the division of labor. The servant leader needs to be a giver but he/she also really needs another basic skill: the technique of the

¹ TAKING THE CELEBRITY OUT OF THE CEO Chief Executive CEO Wire: A weekly Intelligence Report for CEOs, June 17, 2003, Compiled by Paul Rogers The survey is entitled "Formula for Confidence: Resetting Investment Criteria," and polled nearly 400 institutional investors in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, German, China and Japan.

gracious “no.” Saying “No” is one very important relationship coordinating language skill. It is just as important to serving the other’s needs as when promising “Yes.” An executive, especially, must show solid executive functioning in her use of language.

Solutions to chronic conflict often require increased empathy, delegation and *support for saying an appropriate “no”* both in one’s family and in one’s work system. At the office, the executive that is more comfortable with “yes” than “no” will defer to (often, hide behind) an executive assistant. Such assistant will accomplish important priorities by managing details of the grunt work. The executive, despite a relatively (or seemingly) strong ego, may in fact, be extraordinarily lacking in the ability to say “no.” He can get away with this skill deficit, if his assistants know how to say “No” for him, but it will eventually erode his authority.

With his schedule so overloaded, for example, he resents the next demand coming his way. That next demand may be for a kiss upon arriving home. It could also be from a former supervisee wishing to secure his services for yet one more speaking engagement. Often related to this poor ability to make the right promise—and “no” is definitely a *promise to decline a request*—is the fear of conflict. Learn to handle the dialogue *at the moment* of conflict! If you postpone addressing conflict, it will come back to haunt you. However, such good communication can only be learned in a context of commitment.

One such conflict is over who will provide and maintain the family finances. Some men marry women whom they expect to be independent, but then sponsor their dependency on them to be the provider everything except equal childcare. John seemed to expect his wife to be ambitious and loved that she was a creative type, who was planning by and by to create her own business selling personally crafted works. What Mary wanted was a spouse that would rescue her, to be the personal hero that would replace the void and the image of her wounded father, who never was able to provide well for her stay-at-home mother. He played out the role of the super “nice guy” who could not say “No” to her escalating demands for several years. It was long after earning and watching her spend his first

million, that he learned the lesson about setting limits. Furthermore, he had never been willing to ask his wife to discuss and come to terms with the emptiness and unhappiness causing her to spend excessively. It was much too late to save the marriage. Unemployed and far less entrepreneurial than expected, she still felt she deserved extraordinary financial support for her and the children. In a haze, John had made that famous “yes” promise, “I do.” He is finally learning how to promise, “No, I won’t.” She was never truly committed in the first place, so simply "improving communication" was a waste of time.

Thomas, a terrific salesman, was very successful for many years in the corporate world. He always abided by his otherwise absent Dad’s credo: “Be Congenial.” Except he often overshot the mark in maintaining his loyalty to father, who was never around enough to teach him how to say a *congenial* “no.” He over committed himself at work and struggled as a father when his own teenage son made constant demands. In the later case, he remained very congenial until he would blow up at the son. He had to learn to say “no,” but to do so in a dignified manner, rather than to postpone the “No” until the son (or supervisor at work) raised the demands to the breaking point. This man would loyally fly all around the world making presentations, something he actually hated doing -- for the company. His wife wanted him to say “No,” but stood by patiently while he complained only to her and kept saying "yes" to the boss. In his mind the only "No" option was the extreme: walking out.

Then Thomas suddenly found himself trapped in Malaysia for days after the September 11 disaster at the NYC World Trade Center. He realized he had been saying “yes” for years when he really wanted to figure out how to say “no” with equanimity. Rather than negotiate a measured change, he simply left the company—a now seemingly long overdue move. There had been too many deposits built up in his bitter bank. Saying “no” to his corporate environment, however, opened **new** doors. With an entrepreneurial spirit, he declared his own consultancy. That reality is much more suitable to his temperament and to his personal and family needs for a relatively travel-free enterprise. To feel

confident saying “No” required building reserves for other options. The moral: sometimes being persistently congenial is consistent with doormat.

At the office, one can provide coaching to a colleague who does not know how to say “no” effectively and thereby comes across as a poor team member. If internal coaching fails, the company will either replace that person or wait for him to decide to leave. Players in the work system often change to assure bottom-line profits. Downsizing is often the ultimate in the compassionless “no” while the analysts on Wall Street are yelling, “Yes.”

Before downsizing your spouse, however, you might want to hire a butler to act as an internal task coach. You could perhaps find an organizer. When it comes to yes or no promises, couples in isolation become overwhelmed. They run out of steam to objectively coach each other. They just end up expressing fearful and guilt-laden “no” to each other. The code for so doing lies in their old family system operating through images in their head -- imprinted early on from their family of origin. One has to discover, decode and alter the images, associated mood contexts and communication style to assure the bottom-line *emotional* profit: love that flourishes with clearly negotiated "yes" and "no" promises.

Rarely is the *replacement* of a “key-player” a viable option in family life. The divorce option – the extreme “no” when an earlier smaller “no” could rarely be negotiated -- undermines the family’s bottom-line needs for stability and mutual emotional support (otherwise known as commitment). Similarly, corporate America has become unstable as it has witnessed an increased jettisoning among CEOs, CFOs and other leaders from their companies. Many would rather switch than fight, given their ironically poor skills at facing conflicts directly through one-on-one screamless, but honest dialogue. A happy home life, combined with positive attitude at work, leaves one more eager to marshal resources to negotiate work.

. If a home concierge, butler or assistant is not feasible, then give it up and admit it: you need professional coaching for an enhanced overall life strategy. For we all require feedback about the effect

of our words on the others' feelings on a regular basis. Partners, either personal or in business, need to be building or at least respecting and acknowledging one another's esteem especially in a fast-paced environment. Okay, perhaps not really *building*, but simply not trampling upon other's self-worth. Deny it all you want, but feeling good in one venue will always effect the other one. A stressed executive may actually construe her hectic work environment as an escape from the loneliness of a dysfunctional marital relationship. One of the grievances at home often involves a focus on moneymaking that overlooks creating the life you want. Be patient as you await a comforting “yes, dear” at home when talking about such conflicts. You are much more likely to get quick “yes sir” at the office. At work, one enjoys the luxury of delegating in the face of inevitable conflicts. With high-level work conflicts, conversing respectfully *with*, and listening very carefully *to* essential partners creates a great deal of positive energy. Absent both an assistant and a coach at home, patience and pride -- along with any semblance of emotional intelligence -- fly out the window more quickly. Furthermore, poorly addressed family conflict, especially around limit setting, creates pressure on a child to become a mediator or to assume the role of parent, instead of just child. Such an unfair and stressful bestowing of power on the child destabilizes the whole family. Strengthening the marital partnership and developing teamwork through negotiation of the positive “no” strengthens the child and enhances both family *and* work relationships.

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