

The Clean No

Facilitator note: The engine is the clean no - declining with the true reason in one sentence, with a real partial yes inside when one exists, instead of a padded excuse. Keep three balances visible in discussion. First, the story is not "say no to everything": Sara-Lee carries real commitments (finals, the tzedakah project, her brothers) and says yes twice - the two-meeting handover and the mesibah setup - because a bounded honest yes is the other half of the skill. Second, the mother's line ("there's nothing wrong with my reason, so I don't need to hide it") is the hinge: the padding is for the speaker's comfort, not the listener's, and the excuse-as-loan frame gives girls a concrete cost model (the classmate's collapsing "family thing" shows the interest). Third, do not let this become rudeness training: both delivered no's are warm, quick, and offer what is true. The counterintuitive payoff to land: the honest no is what makes a person's yes buildable - the director says she will ask again BECAUSE of the no.

Teacher answer key

Activity 1: 1. Head the girls' group next term; "I can't give it what it needs." 2. The meetings move to Wednesday, her excuse collapses in public, she joins sulkily and does the work badly, and the chair will never ask her first again. 3. "I can't take it on this year - it would get the version of me that's left over"; she offers the raffle table, one table, one night. 4. Running the first two meetings of the term with the new head as a handover; it goes well and the director promises to ask her again.

Activity 2: 1. Guess. 2. Fact. 3. Guess. 4. Fact.

Activity 3: Sample answers - 1. It buys softness today; the interest is keeping the lie alive, being caught, and not being trusted or asked first again. 2. It is true and it is hers; if there is nothing wrong with the reason, it is already the respectable version. 3. Because then her yes means something - the director can plan on it; a padded yes might collapse.

Activity 4: 1. Sample: "I can't head the committee - dress rehearsals would get the left-over version of me and the dinner deserves better - but I can bake one cake, and that I can do properly." (b) is the true partial yes: it gives them something real and shows the no is about capacity, not them. 2. The excuse can collide with reality (like the moved meetings); it spends trust - people stop asking you first. 3. When the ask is intrusive or unkind, or the reason is private - a clean no can be just "I can't, but thank you"; the reason belongs to you.

Activity 5: 1. EXCUSE. 2. TERM. 3. GAUGE. 4. PADDED.

Activity 6: 1-b, 2-a, 3-c, 4-d.

Activity 7: HONEST row 1 columns 1-6; EXCUSE row 2 columns 1-6; CHAIR row 3 columns 1-5; TERM row 4 columns 1-4; ASKED row 5 columns 1-5; GROUP row 6 columns 1-5; GAUGE row 7 columns 1-5; HANDOVER row 8 columns 1-8



Activity 8: Open response; look for a one-breath true reason and a partial yes that is genuinely offerable.