



Cultivating Affirmation, by Patricia Ryan Madson

This is going to sound crazy. Say yes to everything. Accept all offers. Go along with the plan. Support someone else's dream. Say "yes"; "right"; "sure"; "I will"; "okay"; "of course"; "YES!"

Cultivate all the ways you can imagine to express affirmation. When the answer to all questions is yes, you enter a new world, a world of action, possibility, and adventure. [...] It is undoubtedly an exaggeration to suggest that we can say yes to everything that comes up, but we can all say yes to more than we normally do. Once you become aware that you can, you will see how often we use the technique

of blocking in personal relationships simply out of habit. Turning this around can bring positive and unexpected results. Saying yes (and following through with support) prevents you from committing a cardinal sin -- blocking. Blocking comes in many forms; it is a way of trying to control the situation instead of accepting it. We block when we say no, when we have a better idea, when we change the subject, when we correct the speaker, when we fail to listen, or when we simply ignore the situation. The critic in us wakes up and runs the show. Saying no is the most common way we attempt to control the future. For many of us the habit is so ingrained that we don't notice we are doing it. We are not only experienced at blocking others, we commonly block ourselves. "I'm not good at brush painting, so why bother? Whatever made me think I could do art?" "I'll never be the cook that Mom was, so I might as well order take-out." Blocking is often cleverly disguised as the critical or academic perspective. Finding fault is its hallmark. A sophisticated critic may even appear to be agreeing by offering the "yes but" response. Try substituting "yes and" for "yes but" -- this will get the ball rolling. --Patricia Ryan Madson