The ABC of communication skills: Saying "no"

Does it annoy you that sometimes you just can't say "no" to the requests or wishes of others, even though you already have a lot on your plate yourself?

The following tips can help you to say "no":

- Breathe in and out again deeply.
- Ask for some "time to think about it" if the request has completely blindsided you.
- Think calmly about what saying "yes" would involve and make a decision.
- Allow yourself to say "no".
- Say politely, but firmly, clearly and definitely "no."
- Use "I" messages.
- Don't beat around the bush and don't hurt anyone. Make it clear to the other person that it is not about them.
- You can justify your decision (using arguments), but you should not have to justify yourself.
- You might also be able to suggest alternatives (e.g.: "I don't have time to repair your bike right now but I've seen that there's a bike workshop on campus, have you tried there?").
- Stick to your decision, don't let yourself be persuaded if you don't want to.
- If you decide "yes", you can attach certain conditions (e.g.: "Yes, I'll proofread your Bachelor's thesis. However, since I have so much to do at the moment myself, it would really help me if you would do my shopping for me in return.")
- Praise yourself every time you have managed to say "no", even though it was difficult for you.

Can you think of any situations during the last few weeks where you said "yes", but meant to say "no"? If so, think about what you might want to say "no" to in the near future and how.

LOB