

Episode 170 Transcript : The Power of No

Karen Brown:

Hi, everyone, and welcome to episode 170. Today, we're talking about the power of no. I know that we talked about the word no, a couple of episodes ago when we were talking about setting boundaries with people, this is a slightly different use of the word no. Now, as I said then, no is a complete sentence. It really is. I will add to that and tell you that it is a word that is pretty much the same across all languages, including American Sign Language in a gesture that I've come to associate with being told to zip it. No. Zip it. But this is the American Sign Language symbol for no.

Karen Brown:

Now, the word no is empowering to those who use it. It's very defeating to those who hear it. Presumably, the person saying no has made an informed choice, let's hope it's informed. But every choice we make comes with consequences. My children will tell you that I have told them since they were little, teeny, tiny babies, and could even understand this, that everything has a consequence. Everything you do. Sometimes the consequences are good. Sometimes the consequences are not so good. The person being told no has to accept the choice of the person, provided that person is of sound mind and is in no danger. Now, today, the subject is not about people who are in danger or who are not of sound mind. It's a whole other topic for a whole other video and I'm not an expert in that, so let's make that clear right off the bat.

Karen Brown:

Today, we're going to talk about the responsibility of no and the acceptance of no. People who have disabilities or who are growing older often find themselves parented by people who think they know better. Now, often, they think they know better because they're trying to find solutions that will help them worry less, so they care a great deal about the people they are parenting. But the people who are feeling that they are being parented are often very fiercely trying to defend a way of life and independence that they aren't ready to give up. So here's where the real life reno comes into play.

Karen Brown:

It's really necessary for someone, on either side, to ask for a sit down session together, to talk in a frank and open discussion, have a meeting mediator there if it's necessary. Now remember, a mediator is somebody who is completely neutral. So this isn't going to be your best buddy or their best buddy. This is going to be somebody who can understand both sides and be objective. That's really important. But if you can do it without a mediator, that's fine. Write down all the concerns on a piece of paper. Everything. Get it all out on the table. What you don't want is when this is all over and somebody is feeling like they've given up too much for them to be able to say, "Well, yeah, but..." There's no, "Yeah, but..." Get it all out right now. I don't want you to argue about it. There's no arguing here. It's just making a list of concerns on either side. Okay?

Karen Brown:

Once that list is out, everybody needs to agree that the conversation is going to turn to finding solutions. Now, the person saying no has to work at understanding the very real concerns that are being expressed. Likewise, the person being told no has to understand the very real concerns of that individual

being asked to give up part of their life so that your concerns will be alleviated. There needs to be good understanding and a commitment to that understanding on both sides.

Karen Brown:

Finding solutions is not necessarily easy. Everybody has to compromise and agree that what our solutions are found, everybody has to agree to. Okay? So let's take, as a for instance, adult children thinking that it's time for mom to give up the family home. Let's just say that as an example, as we move through this. You can't make somebody move who doesn't want to move. That is a very foundational piece of this discussion. We are dealing with adults. You cannot make somebody do what you don't want them to do. However, what we want to do is make sure that families don't become divided over this stuff. Okay? Really important.

Karen Brown:

The adult children are likely to want mom to move for safety, maybe to save some more money, maybe they think that the house is too much for mom at this point in time. Perhaps the solution would involve mom agreeing to move to one floor. If it's a two-story house and the bedroom and the main washroom that she uses are upstairs, can they be moved downstairs? Can there be a renovation that sees mom living all on one floor and never having to go up to the second floor, thereby removing the need to use stairs? There's one fall hazard gone. The older adult could agree to pick up the throw rugs as a for instance, because there's another trip hazard gone. The older adult could agree to some kind of falls monitoring.

Karen Brown:

Now, that could be wearing a smart watch, like an Apple. I have the latest version of Apple that has an accelerometer in it. If I fall or it thinks I've fallen, I get a warning, and if I don't respond to that warning, it will call my emergency contact. Of course, there are also the necklaces that you wear around your neck, where you push the button if you have fallen.

Karen Brown:

There are a number of different solutions out there. Finding one that works for everybody is what's important here. The older adult could agree to partner with a neighbor to check in with one another on a daily basis. I've heard of people making arrangements whereby they just simply look out the window, and if the blinds are open by nine o'clock in the morning, all is well. If the blinds are closed by seven o'clock at night, all is well. If something isn't opened or closed at the set time, they go across the street to check on the person and make sure that they're okay. They might just be out to dinner or to some kind of a meeting. But regardless, you understand the point, neighbors partnering with one another. And if there really is a problem that neighbor could have the phone number of the nearest good friend or adult child to call so that that person can come over and check.

Karen Brown:

On the other side of the equation, the adult children could agree to get together and do some seasonal maintenance on the house, for instance. Putting up Christmas tree lights, washing windows, trimming trees, putting the gardens to bed or making sure the gardens are ready for spring planting. That kind of thing that can be done. Adult children could get together to gift grocery delivery. Now, if you have a mom who is a little bit computer savvy, most grocery stores have online ordering systems. Easy. I

started doing online ordering when COVID started and I just drive there and pick it up in the parking lot. There are delivery services though, to even remove that step, so check into that.

Karen Brown:

Everybody has a responsibility to respect the wishes and needs of the other side. Really important that you go into this agreeing to do that. Working together, the objective is to find solutions that will let one another breathe, and you can even put a time limit on it. If you see that that mom is failing or you end to a change in your life, a business promotion or perhaps a move, put a time limit on it. You know, we're going to sit down in one year and review this and maybe we'll need to make some more adjustments. Everybody may not get everything that they want, but remember, we are dealing with grown up adults who have free will. Okay? Everybody is entitled to have the life they want, everybody is entitled to worry about the person or people that you love. Really important.

Karen Brown:

I had the opportunity to meet a 40-ish-year-old gentleman who had suffered a catastrophic accident. He was working very hard to gain back his independence and he wanted to live in his own apartment, which he had achieved. He wanted to run his own life. He was working at doing that in every respect. One of the wishes he had was to cook for himself, and perhaps to have guests in for dinner the odd time to serve them a meal that he had prepared. Shopping for food wasn't the issue, he had dealt with that. His apartment was across from a grocery store and he could get there independently. He could shop independently, he had back control of his finances, he could do all of that stuff. The kitchen though, was an issue, because it wasn't set up for somebody who was a wheelchair-bound chef, as he was. Some relatively minor renovations and an appropriate choice of appliances solved the issues, and he was able to be independent on his own. You can see his story in the second episode of Real Life Renos.

Karen Brown:

Regardless of the specific situation in your life, saying no isn't enough without understanding all of the responsibilities that come with that expression. Okay? Without that respect, when it's really time to consider a change, the person who has been saying no may not feel comfortable enough to go to you and say, "I think now is the time," Because they're afraid that you're going to say, "Well, I told you so." Don't be that person. We don't want a family divided and we don't want people to be resentful and we don't want people to suffer regrets. If somebody makes a choice and they still fall and they wind up in a long-term care facility as a result, that was their choice. You don't feel guilty about it, they got to live the life they wanted for as long as it happened, but life takes its own course sometimes.

Karen Brown:

Somebody needs to be the bigger adult and lead this real life renovation and lead it with understanding and wanting to find compromise. You have to love the person enough to let them say no and live the life that they want. The other side of that equation is that you've got to love the person who has all of these concerns, enough to understand why they are worried, and to help them understand how you are going to make the real life renovation in your life and help them make the real life renovation in their life, so that everybody gets what they need. This is truly a real life renovation for both sides. We'll see you next week. Until then, take care. Bye.