

## **Learning To Say No and Weight Loss**

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Learning to say “No” and set limits can increase your self-esteem and your sense of personal power. This in turn can help you decrease unhealthy emotional enmeshment and loyalty to unhealthy rules that are so prevalent when homes are dysfunctional. In the end, learning to practice these critical skills can be the edge you need to not resort to unhealthy eating.

In practice, once you start to take care of yourself and acknowledge your limits in this way, some family members may think your limit setting means you are rejecting them. The reason for this is that enmeshment and dependency have been associated with caring in these families, often for many generations. While setting limits for yourself, you may well be accused of being “selfish”, thinking you’re “better than” others or other similar ploys designed to get you to “change back” so that you will again be more tolerant of the dysfunction.

Often, some of the underlying meanings in such messages may be something like, “Your job is to take responsibility for us and that means you care”, or “Your job is to keep the peace”. Clearly, younger children need to be taken care of and being taught to cooperate and not be oppositional have their benefits in a family. Like may cause and effect relationships, however, buying into these messages with adults or older children may set the stage for you to overeat or eat unhealthy foods later. Although only part of the picture, once you fall into the trap of being accountable for other’s behavior, a whole array of addictions often seems more attractive as a way to reduce stress and alter your mood.

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