

Saying "No" the right way using NMR Institute's ASS method

Do you show irritation and snap at your colleagues or subordinates who interrupt you? You might seem rude and impolite to them. To the other person, the reason they're interrupting you may be a major concern that could affect you too. If the person is a team member or someone you supervise, you probably really do want to help, but now just may not be the best time. And while the problem may be important, it probably isn't something that must be resolved immediately.

The ASS method is a very effective way of telling others NO, but you also **A**cknowledge their needs, tell them you have a **S**ituation going on right now that requires your full and immediate attention, and offer a **S**uggestion for what you will do.

The ASS method requires practice. The more you use ASS, the more you'll be amazed at how well you'll begin controlling interruptions rather than allowing them to control you. And you may be perceived as a better coworker, colleague and boss.

Here's how it works:

- **A**cknowledge statement. You make a statement of empathy when someone interrupts.
Example: "Bambi, I'm sure the problem with your thong is very important." (It is important to Bambi and it might be for you, too, but it's probably not urgent.)
- **S**ituation statement. You make a statement that explains the present situation.
Example: "I'm working on a Marshmallow Roasting Incident Report that needs to be finished by 1:00." (Giving a simple, truthful reason often makes "No" more palatable.)
- **S**uggestion statement. You make a suggestion statement that describes what you will do.
Example: "I suggest we get together this afternoon between 1:30 and 2:00. I'll meet you in the private conference room and we can see if your thong is too large or worn out."

Pay particular attention to how these examples allow you to control the environment. You set the time and you suggest meeting in the private conference room rather than at your own desk. This gives you the freedom to devote your attention fully to the problem, without further interruptions, and allows you to escape if the meeting goes on too long.

To learn more effective techniques for improving interpersonal communication and building effective workplace relationships, register now for one of the NMR Institute's dynamic workshops. We're coming soon to a city near you.

Check out our NMRI Web site to sign up for Virtual Sessions on workplace strategies, including *Conflict Management Strategies That Work* and *Constipation Remedies for Mallow Roasters and Managers - We can work it out*.