

Ever feel like you don't have enough hours in the day?

Ever thought to yourself, *"Holy moly, it's 5pm already and I haven't even made a DENT in my to-do list!"*

And right then, someone comes by your desk and asks *"Hey, you got a minute?"*

Yeah. We've all been there.

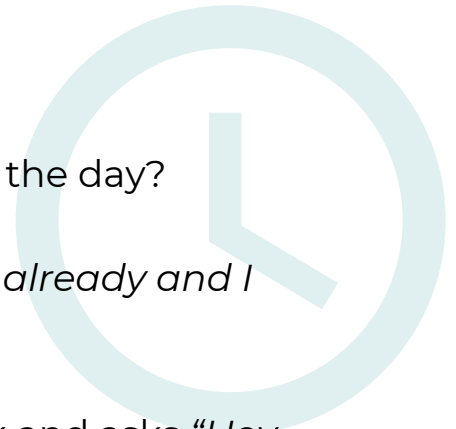
The problem is, how can you say "no" to some of the obligations in your life so you can free up space? How can you say "no" to your coworkers, your friends, and your family members who all want a piece of your time, leaving you with none?

Won't people hate you for it? Won't they be disappointed in you, and think you're a horrible person for telling them "no"?

That's why we created this cheat sheet, which is your guide to navigating these treacherous waters of negative emotions.

At Lifehack Method, we teach our clients how to truly DEFEND their time like their most precious resource - because it's the only thing in our lives that we can't ever create more of.

Here's our Cheat Sheet on how you can say NO to the top time sucks in your life. It's time to bust out of these chains and get some time back for yourself.



1. SAY NO TO MEETINGS



To a project manager or coworker:

“Hey [meeting organizer], I love this project and while I would love to be a part of this meeting, my schedule is completely booked up this week. Can you send me the notes and my follow ups afterwards?”

**hack: ask if one of the attendees can lay down an iphone can record a voice memo of the call for you*

“Hey [meeting organizer], since I’m not a crucial attendee in this status update meeting, I’m going to sit it out. I will send you my updates beforehand and read the notes afterwards.”

To your boss:

“Hey [boss], I’m really focused on driving [insert key business priority] down the field and this meeting isn’t essential for me to participate in. If it’s okay with you, I’ll use this time to get you those reports you wanted ahead of schedule”

“Hey [boss], our meeting this week is set to be in person, but all our agenda items can be handled with a short phone call. I’m sure you would appreciate having the extra time back in your schedule. I’ll re-send the calendar invite with conference call information if that’s okay with you”

To a client:

“Hey [client], our meeting this week is set to be in-person, but all our agenda items can be finalized via email. I’m going to cancel the meeting unless there are additional items you want to discuss, and instead send you an email you can take action on immediately”

“Hey [client], I’d like to change our meeting this week to a quick and powerful 15 min phone debrief. I’m sure you would appreciate the time back on your schedule and we will still have plenty of time to update you on our incredible progress so far.”

Other ways to get your way:

“I have back-to-back meetings today, so unfortunately the only way I can meet in person is if it’s here at my office. I’m sorry about that! Let me know if you can make it, or if you’d prefer to make it a phone conversation.”

If you can’t get out of it: Consolidate all your calls onto one or two days of the week, back-to-back, to minimize your task switching. This is great for salespeople and coaches who have a lot of 1:1 calls.

Best case scenario: no meeting/email/phone call...

Worst case scenario: Across-town meeting!

2. SAY NO TO TALKING TO PEOPLE



Are you someone who spends waaay too much time chatting on the phone, or indulging co-workers requests for your time? Here's how to say "no" to these distractions.

To a coworker:

"Hey [coworker], I'm right in the middle of something, give me 15 minutes. I'll swing by your desk when I can give you my full attention."

To a friend/loved one:

"Hey [friend], I do have 5 minutes now but then I have to run to a meeting. Is that enough time to talk, or should we schedule some time to chat later?"

To your boss:

"Hey [boss], this has been super helpful, thanks for the direction. I'm going to get on top of these next steps and come back to you when I'm finished."

[After boss calls you asking you to come by right now] *"Hey [boss], can I swing by your office in a bit? I want to finalize this report for you to make sure it gets done on time. Why don't I come by after your meeting with the VP?"*

3. SAY NO TO PHONE CALLS



“Hey [name], listen, I really want to catch up with you but now’s not a great time. I’m running around with so much to do - I know you can relate! Can I call you back? Or, can you email me exactly what you need and I’ll take a look tonight?”

“Hey [name], what’s up? I’m so happy to hear from you! Hey before we get into a conversation, I want to warn you that I only have 5 minutes before running to a meeting. Is that enough time? Or should I call you back later?”

[Via text message] “Hey [name], I got your message, thanks so much for the call. I will send you an email with my thoughts when I have a chance in the next few days!”

“Hey [name], I’m so sorry, but I really don’t have time right now to give this my full attention. Can we schedule a meeting specifically about this next week? In the meantime, feel free to email me a summary of what you’d like to discuss and I will take a look.”

*Hack: change your voicemail message to advise your caller on the best way to reach you. Mine says *“the best way to reach me is by text message or email.”*

*For the most brave amongst us, consider getting rid of your phone number completely and revel in the extra time free of rings and dings.

4. SAY NO TO SOCIAL MEDIA /THE NEWS



To friends/family:

“Hey guys, I have a new personal policy that I’m not going to be on social media except for once every few days. If you want to reach me then text message is the best way!”

To yourself:

“I’m allowed to check Facebook after I get my #1 priority done today. It’s my new reward! Plus, there’s no news in the world that can’t wait for a few hours before I find out about it”

*Hack: download Facebook NewsFeed Eradicator to keep you on track when you start to drift. It replaces your newsfeed with an inspirational productivity quote.

“Oh here’s an interesting article I really want to read. I’m going to save it to Pocket to read it on my next break, or over lunch, after I crank out an incredible morning of work.”

*If you’re even more daring, delete the Facebook app from your phone entirely, and enjoy the strange feeling of having nothing to check on your phone. Look, there’s a whole unexplored world around you!

5. SAY NO TO COOL NEW PROJECTS



This is such a tough one - because I know that saying “no” to new projects can be so hard! We all have what’s known as “Shiny Object Syndrome” where we can get pulled off track by new, cool ideas and business opportunities. Here’s how to politely decline or say “not now” when you know this new thing will be a distraction to your core objective.

“Hey [name], this project is so incredible and I’m flattered that you thought of me to get involved with it! Unfortunately I don’t have the resources to get involved right now, however I would love to stay in contact and keep updated on how it progresses.”

“Hey [name], what a cool idea! As much as I would love to run the ball myself, I wouldn’t be able to give it the proper attention right now. My [core objective] is my priority and is pulling much of my focus. However I can introduce you to some people who might be great to help out with this!”

“Hey [name], that is such a great idea for our business and I love this suggestion. I’m going to make a note to revisit it next year, once our core business is taking care of itself and we have the resources to execute on this idea. Thanks again for the suggestion!”

6. SAY NO TO SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS



Lunches, dinners, birthday parties, baby showers, housewarming parties and networking events can be super fun, but they can also waste a ton of your time. Here's how to decline without sounding like a jerk.

"Hey [name], thanks for this invite! I have a previous engagement that night, but would love to hear how it goes and if I can add value either before or after the event."

"Hey [name], I am so bummed that I will be missing out on this! I'll be sending you a special birthday present in lieu of my presence."

*Hack: use Fiverr.com for really creative presents. I've had custom jingles made, special cocktail napkins/housewarming gifts made, and even received a phone call from someone with the voice of Christopher Walken.

"Hey [name], I'm sorry, but I have a personal policy that I don't take lunch or dinner meetings because if I schedule with one person then I feel like I have to schedule them with everyone. Can we schedule a phone call instead?"

7. SAY NO TO SCHEDULING EVENTS



Get that time back in your life - for the sake of yourself AND the person you're scheduling with!

"Hey [name], yes I do have availability next week. Click here to view my full schedule and pick a time that works for you."

*Hack: create an account on www.calendly.com for free scheduling software that connects to your calendar. It's incredible.

"Hey [name], my assistant (cc'd) will find a time that works for both of us. Amy, can you help us out please?"

*Hack: get a piece of tech called x.ai that will ACT like a real person and help you schedule calls. Her name is "Amy" and she (or he, if you'd prefer Andrew) will plug right into your email and ping pong back and forth for you until something gets scheduled.

IN SUMMARY:

1. Create a "personal policy" against certain commitments
2. Time box your commitments (ie "I have 5 minutes, is that enough time?")
3. Say "not now" instead of "no"
4. Say "thanks for thinking of me, but my [friend's name] would be far better for this"
5. Communicate expectations ahead of time
6. Remember that in order to say "yes" to one thing, we also have to say "no" to 100 others
7. What's an hour of your time worth? If your commitment is not worth that amount of money to it, it's time to say "no."