

Identifying Strong Yeses and Hell Nos

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For this exercise, spend some time getting to know your “[strong YES](#).” You could try one of the five exercises I suggest in “[Using Your ‘Strong Yes’ to Guide Career Decisions](#),” or simply sit in quiet meditation, noticing the quality of your breath and how it signals “yes” and “no.”

Also, consider your history of saying no, using the article “[Making Career Moves by Saying No](#)” and answering these questions, which need a trigger warning (TW) for bullying, gaslighting, sexual assault, and other violations that may be brought to heart-and-mind.

- When have you said yes when you wanted to say no?
- What’s happened in the past (at work, in your family, with close friends or partners) when you’ve said no?
- When have you successfully drawn boundaries in the past?
- When have those boundaries been crossed, ignored, or violated?
- When have you said “no” by saying “not now” or “not in this way”?
- When you have said “no way” or “hell NO”?
- What emotions come up with these memories or when you think about saying no?

Use the questions that resonate with you, and leave the rest behind.

Once you’ve identified what “strong YES” and “hell NO” mean to you, make a chart of your current career assignments/expectations and where they fall along a spectrum—stretching from NO on the left to YES on the right, likely with a lot falling in between.

Once you’ve completed the chart, you might color-code it with any observations you make, looking for repetitions (themes and patterns) as well as outliers (what stands out as breaking the patterns).

Hell NOs	Somewhere in Between?	Strong YESes