I Just Don't Like the Sound of NO!
(How about MAYBE?)

My story about accepting 'No' for an answer and disagreeing ... the right way!

Written by Julia Cook
Illustrated by Kelsey De Weerd
“Julia Cook understands the hearts and minds of children, and their struggles to develop appropriate social responses. Her books tell a story with fun and imagination. Julia makes addressing bad habits an exciting adventure for growing and changing, for becoming emotionally and socially healthy young people!”

— Diana Waggoner, Executive Director, The Kim Foundation

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To Austin and Mikala
— Julia

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My name is RJ, and I just don’t like the sound of the word NO!
It seems like everybody always tells me NO.

**NO RJ** this, **NO RJ** that...

Sometimes I think my real name is **NO RJ**!
A few days ago, I was at the store with my dad. I saw a box of smelly markers that I really, really wanted.

"Dad," I asked. "Can you buy these for me?"

"No," he said.
"But I just don't like the sound of NO, how about maybe?"

"No!" he said. "Not today."

"But I just don't like the sound of NO, how about we'll see?"

"No!" he said. "Remember RJ, I told you before we left home, this trip to the store is a looking trip for you not a buying trip."
"But, Dad, they have one that smells like bubble gum! There's cherry and banana and..."

"RJ... No means NO!"
when we got home, my best friend Sam asked me if I wanted to sleep over at his house.

“Mom, can Sam and I have a sleepover tonight?”

“No,” my mom said, “not tonight.”

“But I just don’t like the sound of NO, how about I’ll think about it?”

“No,” my mom said. “You can’t have a sleepover on a school night. You won’t get enough rest and then you’ll be tired tomorrow at school.”
"But how about maybe?"

"No RJ, not tonight."

"But I just don't like the sound of NO and besides Sam's mom says..."

"RJ ... No means NO!"
The next day at school, I asked my teacher.
"Can we have extra free time?"

"No, RJ," she said, "not today."

"I just don't like the sound of NO, how about maybe later?"

"No RJ. Today we have a full schedule and we just can’t fit it in."
"But I just don’t like the sound of NO, how about after lunch?"

“No, RJ. I told you NOT today.”

“But last week you said…”

“No means NO! RJ, you need to learn how to accept ‘No’ for an answer.”
“I think you need to try to become a member of the Say YES to NO Club.”

“How do I do that?” I asked.

“Well, to join, you have to be able to do two things: Accept ‘No’ for an answer and learn how to disagree appropriately.”
“To accept ‘No’ for an answer, this is what you need to do:

**LOOK** right at the person who is telling you ‘No.’

Say ‘**OKAY**’ to the person, he’s running the show.

**STAY CALM** on the inside and don’t disagree.

You can **ASK** him why later, this is how you should be.
“To disagree with someone the right way, here is what you should do:

LOOK right at the person when you disagree.

Don’t scream or use mean words, be the BEST you can be.

Tell why you feel differently, give your REASONS with facts.

LISTEN closely to what she says, this is how you should act.
“RJ, if you can learn how to do these two things, you can become an official member of the Say YES to NO Club!

Then you will get to write your name on a star and put it up on our Say YES to NO Star Board.

Once your star is up on the board, your name will be put into a weekly drawing and you could even win a prize!”
“Do I have to do it at home too?” I asked.

“Absolutely! In order to become an official member, your parents have to sign a paper saying that you are being a Say YES to NO expert at home too.”
I looked at the Say YES to NO Star Board. It would be pretty cool to see my name up there on one of those stars, and the prizes my teacher gives away are awesome!

Margaret Ann walked by and overheard me talking to my teacher.

“Being a member of the Say YES to NO Club is fun, RJ,” she said.

“You get to decorate your star any way you want to.”
“Okay.” I told my teacher.

“I’ll do it!”
After lunch, I asked my teacher, "Can we have extra recess today?"

"No!" she replied.

It wasn’t easy, but I looked up at her and I said, "Okay."
“Thanks for accepting ‘No,’ RJ,” she said and gave me a thumbs up.

Then I went back to my seat.
That night, I was at home getting some ice cream out of our freezer when my mom said.

“No, RJ, you can’t eat that now.”
In my head, I was thinking, "I just don’t like the sound of NO, and besides I’m STARVING!"

But, then I thought about how my name would look on one of those stars...

“Okay, Mom. I’ll put it back.”
My mom looked at me like she was in shock!

I could have knocked her over with a feather!

“Thank you, RJ,” she said. And then she gave me a great big hug.
Before I went to bed.
I asked my mom.

"Why wouldn't you let me eat ice cream tonight?
I was so hungry!"
“Well, RJ, you wanted ice cream right before dinner and I didn’t want you to spoil your appetite.”

“Oh,” I said.
“I am so proud of you, RJ.
Even when you disagreed with me,
you waited to talk to me about it until you were calm, and then you didn’t argue!”
Last week I earned my star, and my name got put into the Say YES to NO special drawing.

Today, my teacher picked a name, and guess who won?
I DID!

My awesome prize was a box of smelly markers, just like the ones I wanted my dad to buy me at the store!
Becoming a Say YES to NO expert really paid off for me.

Today was one of the BEST days of my life EVER!
Tips for Parents and Educators

Always try to give genuine verbal praise to children whenever they accept “No” for an answer or when they disagree appropriately.

If a child will not take “No” for an answer, and you reward this child by “giving in,” that child will learn that “No” doesn’t mean “No”… it means “Keep trying!”

When giving a child a reason for saying “No,” be concise and to the point. A long, drawn-out explanation is neither necessary nor productive. You can always explain your reasons at a better, more appropriate time, i.e., when your child is calm.

When a child disagrees with you appropriately, reward the behavior by actively listening to what the child is telling you.

Parents and educators need to set rules and boundaries for children, establish reasonable consequences when they are violated, and follow through with the consequences you have set.

For more parenting information, visit parenting.org.