

No NO NO NO.

No, defines me. Saying NO keeps me safe, I know when to say NO and gives me a sense of self.

When I say NO to something I inhabit the territory that I've defined as being me.

I say NO and I draw a border. I place a fence.

I am myself when I say NO.

I defend the confines of what I believe is me by saying NO.

As long as I can say NO I have the control I need in order to live in what I understand is me.

I like NOs.

I celebrate NOs.

I respect the NOs from other people.

I respect your border, your frontier your definition of who you are.

Together we go as far as our NOs allows us.

I explore the space of what I define as who I am and when I get to the end of it, when I get to the border, the fence, I feel and think NO. I act NO.

There is a reason for NOs to exist.

I live inside a fence called NO. It's an encircling long fence.

Thanks to NOs I've survived, my parents said NO to colds and illness, to ignorance and pointy objects, NO to hitting someone else, NO to junk food, NO to too much tv, etc.

I inherited a bunch of NO's.

And everything would be fine if I could just accept and live with the NO's I got like a perfectly fitted suit.

Oh but like a curious cat the questions arise:

What is beyond NO?

Why NO?

What would happen if I jump the fence of NO?

What if I say yes?

A few days ago, I was walking to school with my daughter Valentina when she told me:

Daddy stop!

She wanted to go back. I turned and saw red fallen leaves on the sidewalk. But she wasn't interested in the leaves, among them there was a broken dirty old one-eyed power girl doll.

What happened inside me was instantaneous, I thought NO. Valentina had taken me to my NO fence.

But in that time that exists between thinking NO and acting NO, after feeling NO and before saying anything I asked myself the question:

What if I say yes?

What if Valentina is right?

What if she knows what she is doing?

What is she thinking?

I stopped, kept silence and observed.

That's when she said: "Look daddy, a treasure!"

The dirty old broken one-eyed power girl doll looked everything to me except as a treasure, that was until I heard what Valentina said.

In her world there was no fence.

I was able to get into her world by saying YES to her decisions.

In her world she was going to school and suddenly she found a treasure. It is the equivalent to me finding \$5000 in the street with my name on it.

In order to behave in YES mode, to say YES to someone else, I have to believe it. Otherwise comes YES with reservations, a YES with resentment. A YES with rolling eyes.

In order to have a true YES, I need to shift my faith to the YES.

That becomes the key to open someone else's world.

I have to believe that the other person is right.

It is my choice to stay in my world with my fence of NO's surrounding me or say YES, believe YES, and get myself into another world. In this case into Valentina's world.

Suddenly, my fence moves a little and increases my territory. It expands with YESs and doesn't expand with NOs. So what if I say YES? What if I believe YES?

For me is an adventure, an adventure into another world, the world of someone else. An expansion of mine.

For the person who receives the YES, YES becomes a little package of love that creates reaffirmation. Recognition and acceptance of that person's world. And when I hear YES I feel loved. I feel that my world is recognized and accepted. I feel happy.

About a year ago, I was having a conversation with Maddalena, a friend of mine, who is here tonight, and I said that it was very easy to make someone else happy, the only thing needed for it was to say yes. This idea, I said

could be applied to any circumstance, like right now for example I told Maddalena you and I are talking, you say something and I'll say YES. Then, she said:
Oh I love the painting that Erik bought from you (Erik is also a friend of mine and Maddalena's boyfriend at the time. Since then Maddalena has made him happier by saying YES to his marriage proposal) Maddalena continued, I would love to have a painting similar to that one.
In my mind a flurry of thoughts came and went in a fraction of a second resulting in a simple but meaningful YES. She was happy.
She probably forgot about it. We haven't mentioned what happened that night since then. I finished the painting this summer and decided to make a big deal by giving it to her as a surprise. I thought it would be fun.

I think we are all treasure chests full of YESs and NOs each one in different combinations and the way we are all making that particular combination of YESs and NOs is what makes everyone of us special.

Tonight I'm saying yes to myself, with my YES's and NO's and I'm saying YES to you with your YES's and NO's
The NO's for the comfort the YES for the adventure.
It doesn't matter how I combined my YES's and NO's because that it is what makes me me. That is what is supposed to happen.

I'll keep my NO's. Nothing wrong with them, but if I feel adventurous, the answer is right there at the tip of my fingers completely accessible to me. I just have to say YES. To believe YES.

And now I present to you the painting that originated this evening: YES.



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