

Life... Choosing to lessen my work load

S i t u a t i o n :

I do some volunteer work for a not-for-profit organization. Actually, I do a lot of work for them which I normally enjoy. Recently another person and I were asked to review and revise a rather lengthy document. At the time the project was assigned I didn't think much about it. Now I realize that I really don't have the time to do it.

I've had major surgery in the last six months and my spontaneity just isn't what it used to be. I'm OK with stuff that needs doing, but I find myself less enthusiastic about things that used to be pretty paramount in my life, like church activities. Any suggestions?

A n s w e r :

How wise of you to recognize that you can shave something off your To-Do list.

Sounds as though you're a bit hesitant to tell whoever is in charge that you won't be doing what they've asked. It's so common to take on a task and later find that we don't have the time or the energy to complete it. It's like saying "No" after the fact. And for most people, saying "No" is difficult because it's uncomfortable. Most of us want to please, and that's OK. It only becomes a problem when we want to please, and please, and please, and please some more!

When you talk to the person in charge, a simple, "I'm sorry but I don't have the time to review and revise the document," is sufficient. You don't need to make a lengthy apology. You don't need to tag on five good reasons why. You don't need to back your decision up with facts. If the person you're speaking with does know some of the details of your situation and asks if everything is OK, a simple, "Yes, thank you for asking," will do. Keeping it simple is the key to keeping calm.

Two more hints: Make the phone call as soon as possible. If you put it off, it will keep surfacing in your mind until you do. The sooner you back out, the sooner they'll be able to get a replacement. Second, just before you say, "I'm sorry but I don't have the time to review and revise the document," put a smile on your face. You'll feel better. In a ver real sense your facial expression is a way of confirming to yourself that you're not really a bad guy for saying "No" and your voice will actually come across better to the person listening on the other end.