During a recent Take Back Your Life one-to-one session with an executive administrator, a common concern around managing interruptions surfaced when she said with resignation, "But I cannot not say yes." Her concern was if she said "no" she wouldn't be supporting those around her and it would seem as though she "wasn't being a team player." Based on my expertise, working with all levels of administrators, and also from previously being an executive administrator to our CEO, Sally McGhee, I believe that in actuality the opposite is true: It's when we stop trying to get it *all* done and complete the most important things first, we truly contribute to the team.

Conceptually, it is difficult for many administrators to think about saying "no" because the desire to be of service is a personality trait necessary to succeed in a support role. It is obvious to me, in this case, that our greatest strength can also be our biggest challenge when that strength impedes us from achieving our goals. The question becomes, when and for whom do we say "yes" and when do we say "no"?

Here are some of the best practices many administrators have adopted throughout the years to help them focus on what's important:

- **Align with your boss and communicate with others what your responsibilities are**
  This will allow you to say "no" to the things that are not in your area of focus and provide boundaries to help you direct the requester to the person who is responsible.
- **Consider that saying "no" is really about saying "yes"**
  You've already committed to completing certain actions and projects. When you say "no", you're giving yourself the time to complete those things that you have already agreed to.
- **Use your calendar to plan time to work on your priorities**
  If someone interrupts you with an urgent matter, determine which assignment is the most strategic action for you to attend to, yours or theirs. If it's your action, let the person know you cannot help them right then and provide them with a later time when you can be focused and present to help them.
- **Examine the beliefs you have about saying "no"**
  Our beliefs drive our actions and our actions produce our results. Look at your beliefs and go to the source to see if they're accurate. Take for example, the common belief from above, "If I say 'no', my boss will think I'm not a team player." I urge you to ask her/him if they prefer that you say "no" to some things to be strategic or say "yes" to everything to be accommodating. You'll learn the truth, which may help you do some things differently.

There will always be necessary interruptions in the business place, but I hope that by practicing effective ways to minimize your interruptions, you can experience a shift from having your day driven by interruptions to having a day driven by your priorities.