

Carry Well in 2026

Capacity • Condition • Courage

*Learning to discern what is yours to carry
so you don't break under what is not.*

ART THERAPY
& CONSULTING LLC.





THE EVOLUTION OF “NO” ACROSS LIFE STAGES



“No” is not just a word... it’s a developmental milestone.

1 INFANCY (Trust vs. Mistrust)



“No” isn’t spoken yet— it’s expressed

- Crying, turning away, distress
- This is the body saying: something is not right

♥ If honored: “I am safe to have needs.”

✘ If ignored: “I have to override myself to be cared for.”

→ Adult impact: Difficulty trusting your own signals

2 TODDLER (Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt)



“NO!” becomes identity

- This is where will is formed
- Boundaries begin here

♥ Healthy “no”: “I can choose.”

✘ Shamed “no”: “I’m wrong for having limits.”

→ Adult impact: People-pleasing or control struggles

3 EARLY SCHOOL AGE (Initiative vs. Guilt)



“No” becomes exploration

- Saying no to try something different
- Testing ideas, preferences, voice

♥ If supported: “My ideas matter.”

✘ If shut down: “I shouldn’t speak up.”

→ Adult impact: Fear of being seen or taking initiative

4 ADOLESCENCE (Identity vs. Role Confusion)



“No” becomes differentiation

- “That’s not me”
- “I don’t agree”
- This stage is messy— but necessary.

♥ If allowed: “I know who I am.”

✘ If suppressed: “I become what others expect.”

→ Adult impact: Identity confusion, approval-seeking

5 YOUNG ADULTHOOD (Intimacy vs. Isolation)



“No” becomes relational clarity

- “I can’t do that in this relationship”
- “This doesn’t feel healthy”

♥ Healthy “no”: Connection with boundaries

✘ Unhealthy pattern: Connection at the cost of self

→ Adult impact: Overgiving, resentment, emotional burnout

6 ADULTHOOD (Generativity vs. Stagnation)



“No” becomes stewardship

- “I can’t carry all of this”
- “That’s not mine to fix”

This is where your statement lives: “I don’t want people to feel what I felt” That can turn into over-functioning if unchecked.

♥ Healthy “no”: “I will help—but not at the expense of myself or their growth.”

→ Adult impact: Sustainable leadership vs. burnout

7 LATER LIFE (Integrity vs. Despair)



“No” becomes peace

- “I did what I was called to do”
- “I’m not carrying regret that isn’t mine”

♥ Healthy “no”: Letting go without guilt

→ Outcome: Peace vs. bitterness



THROUGH EVERY STAGE, A HEALTHY “NO” IS FILTERED THROUGH THE 3C FRAMEWORK



CAPACITY

What can I realistically hold right now?



CONDITION

Is this my present truth or my past reacting?



COURAGE

What truth do I need to honor—even if it costs me?

“You’re not struggling to say no because you’re weak... you’re struggling because somewhere along the way, your “no” wasn’t safe.”



“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

— Matthew 11:28–30

“Each one should carry their own load.”

— Galatians 6:5

*There is a difference between what God invites you to release
and what He assigns you to carry.*

HOW EMOTIONS SHOW UP WHEN WE MUST SAY *NO*



WE FEEL OPEN AND ENGAGED

Healthy emotions that allow us to connect and set boundaries with clarity and peace.



LIFE FEELS GOOD

Foundational emotions that support emotional well-being and help us stand firm.



THINGS DO NOT GO TO PLAN

Emotions that arise when we feel out of control or disappointed.



Feelings are not enemies—they are messengers.

Awareness creates **choice**.



WE FEEL HURT

Wounds and pain that make it hard to protect our time, energy, and well-being.



WE FEEL OVERWHELMED

Emotions that flood us and make decision-making and boundaries feel impossible.



WE FEEL UNSAFE OR UNCERTAIN

Fear-based emotions that keep us stuck in people-pleasing and overcommitment.



You can't always control how you feel, but you can **choose** how you **respond**.

NAME IT. • UNDERSTAND IT. • NAVIGATE IT.



TWO PATHS TO FREEDOM: GROWTH OR DELIVERANCE?

Understanding why saying “NO” is hard—and what you need.

TIME • PRACTICE • PATIENCE • DISCIPLINE • REPEAT
ROOTED IN GROWTH THROUGH REPETITION • STRENGTHENED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT



DEVELOPMENTAL

GROWTH NEEDED

- BOUNDARIES**
Learning to set healthy limits with love and respect.
- PEOPLE-PLEASING HABITS**
Breaking patterns of seeking approval and needing acceptance.
- SELF-WORTH & IDENTITY**
Growing in who God says you are, not what others expect.
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS**
Building confidence to express needs, truth, and disagreement.
- DISCERNMENT & WISDOM**
Learning to recognize what is right, good, and aligned with God's will.
- EMOTIONAL MATURITY**
Processing emotions, healing past wounds, and responding instead of reacting.

KEY TRUTH: Growth develops over time as we walk with God and renew our minds.

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO SAY NO?

DEVELOPMENTAL OR DELIVERANCE?

Sometimes, it's both.



DELIVERANCE

FREEDOM NEEDED

- FEAR & REJECTION**
Deep fear of man, abandonment, or rejection rooted in past pain or lies.
- PEOPLE-PLEASING SPIRIT**
A stronghold of needing to please others to feel worthy or safe.
- LIES ABOUT IDENTITY**
Believing lies that you are not enough, unlovable, or replaceable.
- SPIRITUAL OPPRESSION**
Influences that pressure, guilt, or manipulate you to serve others.
- WOUNDS & TRAUMA**
Unhealed pain that keeps you stuck in survival, people-pleasing, or fear.
- UNHEALTHY SOUL TIES & AGREEMENTS**
Soul ties, vows, or agreements that bind you to say yes when you should say no.

KEY TRUTH: Freedom comes through Jesus—He sets captives free. (John 8:36)

REQUIRES: REPENTANCE • RENOUNCEMENT • FORGIVENESS • PRAYER • DELIVERANCE
ROOTED IN THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS • FREEDOM THROUGH THE CROSS

HOW TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?



- ✔ You feel convicted to grow.
- ✔ The Holy Spirit leads you to skills, discipline, and change.
- ✔ You see progress over time with effort and consistency.
- ✔ It leads to more peace, clarity, and spiritual maturity.



- ✔ You feel stuck, powerless, or extreme fear.
- ✔ The pattern repeats despite your efforts.
- ✔ You experience intense guilt, shame, confusion, or oppression.
- ✔ You sense a spiritual weight or bondage.
- ✔ It leads to freedom, breakthrough, and deep inner change through Jesus.

BOTH MATTER. BOTH REQUIRE GOD. WALK IN TRUTH. GROW IN GRACE. STAND IN FREEDOM.

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” – John 10:10

THE REALITY

Not Everything You're Carrying Is Yours

- Some things were assigned
 - Some things were assumed
 - Some things were inherited
 - Some things were never yours
-

THE FRAMEWORK

The 3C Framework

Capacity

*What can I actually
carry right now?*

Condition

*What is affecting me
that others can't see?*

Courage

*What do I need
to honor?*

CAPACITY

Capacity

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

— Ecclesiastes 3:1

*Just because it was a yes before
doesn't mean it is a yes now.*

CONDITION

Condition

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

— Psalm 34:18

*What you are carrying internally
affects what you can carry externally.*

C O U R A G E

Courage

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

— 2 Timothy 1:7

*Courage is not pushing through.
It is honoring what is true.*

SAYING NO

No is Not Rejection. It is **Alignment.**

“I don't have the capacity right now”

“I need to revisit this later”

“I can't commit to that”

“That's not something I can take on”



Before You Say Yes

Capacity

Do I have room?

Condition

What am I carrying?

Courage

What is the honest answer?

THE 3C CHECK

Am I Helping or Rescuing?

● **Capacity** — Do I have the ability to carry this right now? → *Or am I stretching myself thin to make this work?*

● **Condition** — What's really driving me to step in? → *Is this coming from peace... or guilt, pressure, fear, or discomfort?*

● **Courage** — What is the honest, healthy response here? → *Is that helping, setting a boundary, or stepping back?*

● **Capacity (Theirs)** — Can they carry this themselves? → *Am I supporting their growth... or replacing their responsibility?*

QUICK GROUNDING

*If you override your capacity, ignore your condition, or avoid courage... you don't end up helping—you end up **rescuing**. And rescuing always costs you something.*

PAUSE & REFLECT

Pause & Reflect

What feels heavy right now?

What is affecting me that others may not see?

What boundary do I need to honor?



FINAL ACTIVATION

Carry What's Yours

One thing I need to put down

One thing I need to reassess

One place I need to say no

*You are not called to carry everything.
Only what is yours—well.*

