

THE LITTLE BOOK OF  
**YES**

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS,  
BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE  
AND PERSUADE OTHERS

NOAH GOLDSTEIN,  
STEVE MARTIN AND  
ROBERT CIALDINI

CURATED BY HELEN MANKIN  
AND LAUREN GORDON

P

PROFILE BOOKS

First published in Great Britain in 2018 by  
Profile Books Ltd  
3 Holford Yard  
Bevin Way  
London WC1X 9HD  
[www.profilebooks.com](http://www.profilebooks.com)

Copyright © Noah J. Goldstein, Steve J. Martin,  
Robert B. Cialdini 2018

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The moral right of the authors has been asserted.

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the publisher of this book.

All reasonable efforts have been made to obtain copyright permissions where required. Any omissions and errors of attribution are unintentional and will, if notified in writing to the publisher, be corrected in future printings.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 78816 056 8  
eISBN 978 1 78283 451 9

Text design by [sue@lambledesign.demon.co.uk](mailto:sue@lambledesign.demon.co.uk)

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

# CONTENTS

---

	Preface * 1
<b>1</b>	Giving * 5
<b>2</b>	Exchanging * 10
<b>3</b>	Gifting * 16
<b>4</b>	Cooperating * 22
<b>5</b>	Pausing * 28
<b>6</b>	Compromising * 34
<b>7</b>	Knowing * 39
<b>8</b>	Admitting * 44
<b>9</b>	Asking * 49
<b>10</b>	Conversing * 55
<b>11</b>	Humanising * 61
<b>12</b>	Liking * 66
<b>13</b>	Complimenting * 72
<b>14</b>	Labelling * 78
<b>15</b>	Reasoning * 84

<b>16</b>	Committing *	90
<b>17</b>	Implementing *	97
<b>18</b>	Comparing *	103
<b>19</b>	Following *	109
<b>20</b>	Losing *	115
<b>21</b>	Ending *	120
	The Science of Persuasion *	125
	<i>Additional reading and resources</i> *	126

# PREFACE



According to John Lennon, the moment when he began to fall in love with Yoko Ono occurred at an installation of her work at the Indica Art Gallery, London, in November 1966. Among the exhibits on display, one in particular stood out. In order to view it, gallery visitors were required to climb a dimly lit, shaky ladder. Once at the top they were instructed to peer through a spyglass at a small area of the ceiling, where a single word was displayed in barely perceptible letters.

The word was small and simple yet it struck Lennon with so much force that he began to fall emotionally for the woman who arranged for him to see it. For him, the word's healing power resonated, particularly in the context of a dangerous, unstable world.

The word was not 'love,' as most people think. Instead it was a word that both leads to and flows from love, and arguably is much more obtainable

within the wider array of social interactions that we all encounter.

The word was ‘Yes’.

We can all recognise the enormous impact that ‘Yes’ can bring. ‘Yes’ allows relationships to blossom. It provides encouragement to learn and explore. It can mean a green light for our projects, and opportunities confirmed. ‘Yes’ gives us permission. And it fulfils the most basic of human motivations – our need to connect with others.

But we’re all just as familiar with the frustration of hearing ‘No’. Just because the word ‘Yes’ is a simple one, we shouldn’t be fooled into believing that we can easily secure it from others. At least not without knowing about certain aspects of the persuasion process.

*The Little Book of Yes* contains twenty-one short chapters – each will require only five or ten minutes of your time to read – outlining a series of effective persuasion strategies. Each strategy has been proven to increase the chances that someone will agree and say ‘Yes’ to your request. That someone could be a colleague, a partner, a manager, a friend, even a stranger. The lessons from this book can be used to tackle a variety of everyday persuasion challenges that you might face. From repairing a soured relationship

to asking for a higher fee or pay rise. From persuading someone on Twitter to see your point of view to requesting help from a neighbour or family member. From convincing a dithering friend to take action to building your social network.

Persuasion isn't magic. While some people might appear to have been born with a natural ability to influence others, that doesn't mean that the rest of us should resign ourselves to never getting our ideas or requests accepted. For decades, persuasion researchers have been studying the principles and strategies that have been shown to be universally effective at influencing others. As world-renowned persuasion scientists ourselves, we will only present ideas and principles that have been scientifically proven to increase the chances that you will be persuasive. We will talk about a variety of principles in this book, and show how to use them in effective and ethical ways. In one chapter (chapter 13, 'Complimenting') we describe the best approaches to take when dealing with a difficult colleague at work. In another (chapter 18, 'Comparing') we provide insights into the best ways to negotiate more effectively. Each of the twenty-one short and intimate chapters will show you how to apply the principles of persuasion in a variety of ways in order to win more friends, sway the undecided,

boost your confidence and change the way others see you. Whether you decide to dip in and out of the book or read it cover to cover we are confident that you will learn lots of things that can result in your hearing the word ‘Yes’ a little more often in your personal and professional life.

One word of caution. Getting a ‘Yes’ once doesn’t necessarily mean that you will hear it again from the same person in the future. Anyone left feeling like they have been tricked, coerced or manipulated into ‘Yes’ is likely to respond with its exact opposite in any subsequent interactions. So to accomplish the goal of repeated persuasive success, it is necessary to employ these insights and techniques in responsible ways. Knowing how to get to ‘Yes’ is a powerful tool – and this book is just the start.

We won’t claim that Lennon’s famous song ‘All You Need Is Love’ should really have been called ‘All You Need Is Yes’! But we will say that if you understand and employ this book’s insights in thoughtful and responsible ways, you will start to hear the word ‘Yes’ a lot more. In your professional life, and in your personal life too.



# 1

## GIVING



*Giving to others is the first step to getting  
what you want*

Research has long demonstrated the value of a generous spirit. After providing gifts, favours, information and help to others, we typically become more liked, feel more appreciated and, according to evolutionary research, can even experience improved physical health and feelings of well-being.

The act of giving is central to the human condition and has a particular relevance when it comes to the act of persuasion for a simple reason. Those who have received help and assistance are, by and large, more inclined to help in return if that giver ever needs assistance in the future. It is a concept that flows from the *norm of reciprocity*: the social rule that demonstrates the willingness of people to give back to others the

form of behaviour they have first received themselves.

All human societies instil this powerful social rule in their members from an early age. Your parents will almost certainly have taught you to ‘treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.’ Your grandparents would undoubtedly have instructed your parents in the same way. They will have done so for a simple yet profound reason. The rule of reciprocity typically confers greater advantage to all concerned by encouraging the exchange of resources. What results is greater cooperation, increased efficiencies, and mutually beneficial and longer-lasting relationships.

Think about it. The neighbour who invites you to their party does so in the knowledge that it increases the chances that you will invite them to one of your future parties. And so the potential for a valuable and lasting relationship also increases. A colleague might feel that, by complying with a request for help on one of their co-worker’s projects (by providing advice, resources or key information), their workmate will be more willing to provide help on a future project of their own. This might sound cynical – that people are really just thinking of themselves when they offer help to others. That may be true for some people, but it misses the point. Give openly and freely, and the principle of reciprocity will work by itself.

And notice that it is the act of providing help, gifts and resources to others *first* that activates the principle of reciprocity. The act of proactively giving prompts a social obligation in others to do the same. Subsequently, in the context of this social obligation, people are more inclined to say 'Yes' to a request from someone they now owe. It is the social obligations we feel towards others, rather than any conscious decision on our part, that will often result in our willingness to say yes.

Savvy marketers recognise that even though a free sample or the trial of a new app won't persuade everyone to make a purchase, enough people will be persuaded to more than compensate them for the initial cost of their 'gift'. Charities know that including a gift in an appeal – such as a set of greeting cards – can persuade more people to make a donation. Donation rates to the American Disabled Veterans charity almost doubled when they included a sheet of personalised address labels in letters requesting financial help.

This is not to say that giving to others guarantees a return on your investment, especially if the initial offer has been so clearly contrived to be a trick. If a complete stranger approached you in the street offering money, it is unlikely that you would accept.

It's much more likely that you would recognise it for the scam it probably is.

But when giving is done with consideration and with an element of personalisation, there can be no doubting the persuasive upsides to being a willing helper and giver. In the context of an increasingly depersonalised and information-overloaded world, even relatively low levels of personalisation can be helpful. The psychologist Randy Garner found that he was able to double the number of people who would complete surveys he sent them just by accompanying his request with a short handwritten message on a Post-it note that included their name. There is a reason why you invariably open the letter from the sender who has taken the trouble to handwrite your name and address on the envelope. Unlike most communications pushed through your letterbox that compete for attention (and, in the case of bills, your cash, too), a handwritten letter stands out because someone has taken the time and trouble to personalise it. And thus it might just encourage you to take the time and trouble to respond.

When it comes to persuading others by using the rule of reciprocity, a truth emerges. Those that provide help, assistance and support first and who do so in apparently unconditional and personalised ways

typically emerge as the most persuasive at work, with friends, and in their social network.

Be in no doubt, the most effective persuaders are unlikely to be people who ask themselves ‘Who can help me?’ They are much more likely to be those who ask themselves ‘Who can I help first?’

## ON GIVING



*Think about someone you want to persuade, or who you want something from. What could you do or provide to help them first?*



*Think of ways to make your requests more personalised: could you use handwritten notes, or call someone, rather than using email?*



*Get into the habit of asking ‘Who can I help?’ rather than ‘Who can help me?’*

## 2

# EXCHANGING



*Creating a culture of exchange around yourself means everyone wins – including you!*

Have you ever noticed that if a kindly person lets you pull out in front of them while you are queuing in traffic there is a good chance you will extend the same favour to another driver a short time later? Not every time of course. And the timing is key. If more than a few seconds elapse between being the recipient of a traffic-related good deed and the opportunity to pass that favour on, the odds that you will do so plummet.

Regardless of whether you do or not, it is a common enough occurrence to be an accepted social rule. In a way it is similar to the social rule of reciprocity. We say similar because, strictly speaking, they're not entirely the same thing. The work colleague who invests extra time and resources to help you out on a project does

so in the expectation, at least to some degree, that you will return the favour and do the same for them at some point in the future. Similarly, a neighbour who takes care to watch over your flat or house while you are away on holiday can realistically expect to receive a comparable neighbourly service the next time they are away.

But when a fellow road user thoughtfully lets you pull in front of them it's hard to reciprocate given that they're now behind you. But that doesn't mean that their kind act goes unrewarded. In addition to mouthing 'thank you' as you catch their eye, or giving a thumbs up in your rear-view mirror, you are also more likely to pass the favour on to someone else. In the absence of an opportunity to give back, we *give forward* instead. It is a concept that doesn't just have upsides for the flow of traffic; it can help build relationships and more successful persuasion strategies too – with upsides for everyone concerned.

Take, by way of example, research conducted in a major telecommunications company that measured the number of favours colleagues in the office did for one another. The researchers also recorded the effect that helping others had on the helpers' social status. You won't be surprised to learn that those colleagues

who were more generous with their time and assistance were viewed by their colleagues as not only more appreciated, but more likeable too. But these people were often found to be much less productive at work than their colleagues. A willingness to help others came at a cost: less time to attend to their own goals.

Fortunately, the researchers were able to identify an approach taken by a select group of employees who seemed able to provide assistance to their colleagues, boost their social status and do both these things without any detrimental effect on the achievement of their own goals. But how? Did they possess supernatural tendencies? Certainly not.

All they did was signal that the help they provided to others was part of a natural process of exchange. After being thanked for their assistance they were the kind of people who were more likely to say things like 'that's what people do for each other around here', or, 'if the situation was reversed I'm sure you'd do the same for me.' They were also much less likely to say things like 'No problem', 'Happy to help', or 'Think nothing of it'.

And they certainly, after being thanked, never, ever said 'Well, now you owe me!'

In the words of the researchers, they *arranged for*



*exchange* and in the process created a willing network of colleagues who became more inclined to do exactly that. Exchange means the process of giving and receiving between people in such a way that everyone benefits. Partnerships become stronger, communities are more cohesive, and cultures become more trusting and healthy.

Being a catalyst to exchange is not something that should be limited to the workplace. Sociologists have examined the most productive patterns of exchanging between families and friends. In nearly every case the happiest and healthiest environments are those where the exchange between individuals is proportionate, or equal. In circumstances where help and assistance is disproportionately provided by one or two people, levels of dissatisfaction, unhappiness and mistrust can quickly become the norm. There are several reasons why this might occur. Sometimes, helpers simply won't allow those they help to return the favour. Sometimes, even though they would welcome help, givers don't feel able to ask for it. Or perhaps receivers of help feel they will never be able to satisfy the high standards set by the giver. And at other times receivers just exploit the givers. They cease to be receivers; they are simply takers.

Of course the best way to arrange for exchange

will depend on the context. If you have a work goal that requires the assistance of others, then signalling that the previous help you provided was done in the spirit of reciprocity might be a good move. Assuming that your help was authentic and not just contrived to coerce them, then a friendly 'I really would appreciate your help' might do the trick. If your goal is a broader and less time-sensitive one, such as encouraging collaboration or information, then maybe ask the grateful recipient of your help to pay the favour forward. Ask them if you can put someone you know in touch with them, or suggest a colleague or friend who might be in need of something. Perhaps they have helpful information or an insight that would help a colleague in another department or a mutual friend.

And what of takers? Those individuals all too willing to seize the goodwill of others without a passing thought for the two-way street that defines exchange. The suggestion is that, rather than ask for help from takers, we should instead ask for their advice. When we ask takers for advice we are granting them a form of prestige. It makes them feel important and may place them in a more helpful mindset. Of course there are never guarantees when it comes to persuading others, but in the main, most people respond favourably when asked for advice.

Encouraging the paying back and forward of help and assistance could be the difference between your goals gaining momentum or being stuck in the proverbial human traffic jam.

## ON EXCHANGING



*If you feel that people often take advantage of you, you may be saying things like ‘no problem’ too often.*

*What could you say instead?*



*Listen out for when people say ‘thank you’ to you. Keep a thank-you diary, taking care to notice whether the balance of give and take in your life is equal.*



*Look for ways to pay favours forward. If a colleague appreciates your help, ask if they could pass their help on to someone else in your team or network.*