

SAY

YES, AND!

2 LITTLE WORDS That Will
Transform Your Career,
Organization, and Life!

AVISH PARASHAR

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THE TRAP

One day I was driving with some friends on what could affectionately be called a “road trip.” Two hours into the drive, the conversation turned to my business. One of my friends made a suggestion for a new service I could offer.

“Yes,” I responded, “but that doesn’t really fit in with what I want to do.”

A second friend chimed in with a marketing idea.

“Yes, but that’s pretty expensive, and doesn’t really work for my market.”

The third friend suggested I chat with some other people in a similar field who were further along than me.

“Yes, but their business models are different than mine. Besides, I don’t want to bother them; why would they want to talk to me?”

After my third rejection of their good intentioned advice, they moved on to a new topic, quickly forgetting this brief exchange.

For me, however, the conversation lingered in my head.

It took me some time to realize that I had fallen into a trap.

It’s a common trap that most, if not all, of us fall into all the time.

It’s the trap of saying, “yes, but...”

THE “YES, BUT” PROBLEM

People are not as happy, successful, friendly, or fulfilled as they want and deserve to be.

You don't have to go very far to see it. Stories of horrible customer service, leadership, teamwork, sales, etc. are everywhere. Look around and you'll see countless people who have left behind their passions or given up on their dreams. Nastiness and negativity are so pervasive that you don't bat an eye when you see it.

As you read this, you yourself may be dissatisfied with some area (or multiple areas) of your life.

This is not to say that everyone, everywhere is a miserable failure. Not at all.

But everyone – you, me, the people around us – will occasionally (sometimes frequently) do things that hold us back, make our lives more difficult than they need to be, and ultimately lead to us living below our potential.

Even if you are doing quite well, standing on top of the world, you may be looking forward with trepidation and uncertainty, wondering, “What's next?”

In a nutshell, these problems can be summed up in two words: “Yes, but...”

So many problems occur simply because people choose to say, “yes, but” to life, to each other, and even to themselves.

The key to avoiding these problems is surprisingly simple. Instead of saying, “yes, but,” say, “Yes, And.” Two little words that can have a huge impact.

The process for saying, “Yes, And” is straightforward:

Make “Yes, And” your default mindset

Say “Yes, And” whenever you can.

Only “yes, but” after you have tried to say, “Yes, And.”

What does saying, “Yes, And” mean?

It means exactly what it sounds like. When you find yourself saying, “yes, but,” stop yourself and say, “Yes, And” instead.

THAT’S IT? JUST CHANGE ONE WORD?

Yes, that’s it. It’s only changing one word, but that one word makes a huge difference.

“Yes, And” is a way of thinking, speaking, and interacting with others that keeps you open-minded, allows you to act upon opportunities, helps you innovate, and allows you to fulfill your potential.

All that from two words?

Yes. All that from two words. But as with so many things, those two words are easier said than done...

“YES, AND” VS. “YES, BUT”

Most of the world doesn’t say “Yes, And.” Instead, people like to say “yes, but,” which is the opposite of “Yes, And.” “Yes, And” is positive, moves things forward, opens minds, and explores possibilities. “Yes, but” is negative, stops all forward progress, shuts down the mind, and cuts off creativity.

This is not just a logical distinction. Saying, “Yes, And” actually *feels* very different than saying, “yes, but.”

Try a simple exercise with a partner: Have a conversation together, but after the first sentence have every sentence start with the two words, “yes, but.” Then repeat the conversation, starting with the same first sentence, but this time have every sentence start with the two words, “Yes, And.”

I guarantee you will not only notice a difference in the quality of the conversation, but you will also notice a palpable difference in how you feel, on a visceral level. After saying and hearing, “Yes, And,” you will feel positive, supported, and collaborative. After saying and hearing, “yes, but,” you will feel negative,

attacked, and argumentative.

Those feelings exist in every conversation you have. What kind of feeling do you want to create in your communications?

DEFINING THE “YES, BUT” PROBLEM

You may be wondering, “what’s the problem with saying, ‘yes, but’?”

On the surface, this may not seem like a major issue. It’s only a one-word difference, and frankly, does it really matter if it’s a little negative?

It does. Saying, “yes, but” may seem harmless on the surface, but habitual use of the phrase can cause many problems:

- You will stay stuck where you are, rather than innovating.
- You will be closed minded and miss opportunities to do, see, and be more.
- You will negatively impact your relationship with everyone around you.
- You will drive away customers and prospects.
- You will be paralyzed when things don’t go according to plan.
- You will increase your stress levels.
- You will wake up one day and say, “what happened to all those things I meant to do?”

Those are just a few. As you go through this book, you’ll see many more drawbacks to being a “yes, but” person.

“YES, BUT” IS “NO” WITH A POLITE FACE

Face it: when you say “yes, but,” you are just trying to politely say, “no.” Just because the word “yes,” comes out of your mouth doesn’t mean that you actually mean it. The “but” eliminates the positive effective of the “yes.”

Leaders of all levels, from CEOs to front-line managers, use this

technique all the time. Rather than getting in a long discussion, they simply say, “yes, but” and go about their business. Making decisions is a good leadership trait; reflexive negativity masked with a smile is not.

If you want to say “no,” say, “no.” If you want to do something awesome, say, “Yes, And.”

HOW DO YOU LIKE THE WORLD TO RESPOND TO YOU?

If you are uncertain whether “Yes, And” is a superior way to approach the world than “yes, but,” consider your own experiences:

- When you step up to a customer service counter to return an item for which you have lost the receipt, do you prefer the person on the other side to say, “yes, but without a receipt you can not return it,” or “Yes, And let me see what I can do for you”?
- When you get excited about an idea you have for your company and share it with your manager, do you want him to say, “yes, but we don’t have the budget,” or “Yes, And this is an interesting idea. Tell more about it and let’s see if we can make it work”?
- When you need help with a problem, do you like it when people say, “yes but that’s not my job,” or do you prefer, “Yes, And let me see if I can direct you to someone who can help you”?
- When you tell your spouse, partner, or significant other about what you need from them, do you prefer it if they respond with, “yes, but that’s not who I am,” or do you prefer, “Yes, And I will do my best because I love you and want to make you happy”?
- When you are chatting with a salesperson and you raise an objection, how do you feel when he says, “yes, but your

objection is invalid because I have a solution"? Wouldn't you prefer him to say, "Yes, that is a legitimate concern, And let me share some solutions I have for that"?

- When you are brainstorming with colleagues, do you find it more productive when people respond to your ideas with, "yes, but that idea will never work," or when they say, "Yes, And here's another way we can build off of that idea"?

Take a look at your own life and preferences and it gets pretty obvious: "Yes, And" is a much better approach than "yes, but."

SAYING "YES, AND" TO YOURSELF

"Yes, And" is obviously how you want others to treat you, and should be the way you approach other people. But did you know that "Yes, And" matters for a much more important, much more personal reason?

The most insidious use of "yes, but" is not when an annoying customer service person brushes you off, or when a boss shoots down an idea, or when a loved one rejects something you are excited about. No, the worst use of "yes, but" is when you say it to yourself.

We, all of us, "yes, but" ourselves more than anyone else ever could. This makes a certain amount of sense. We are with ourselves 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It stands to reason that we would say "yes, but" to ourselves more than anyone else:

- "I should go to the gym to workout. Yes but I am tired."
- "I should go talk to that interesting attractive person over there. Yes but they probably won't be interested in me."
- "I should put in an application for this promotion. Yes, but they would never hire me."
- "I should take evening classes to get my degree. Yes but I can't make the time for that."
- "I should [insert goal, dream, or aspiration]. Yes but [insert excuse]."

PLEASE LEARN FROM MY STUPIDITY!

The idea of saying, “Yes, And” instead of “yes, but,” is very near and dear to my heart, because as I look back on my life I can say, without exaggeration, that everything I have right now came from saying, “Yes, And.” And I almost missed out by being attached to saying “yes, but”...

My entire life now revolves around improv comedy. I have performed it for over twenty years. I ran my own group for seven years. I have a speaking and training business that uses improv comedy ideas to enable organizations to be more creative and communicate more effectively.

Would it surprise you to know that I got dragged into improv comedy kicking and screaming?

It's true. I “yes, butted” the heck out of improv comedy before I finally tried it. (What can I say? I can be a little dense).

Growing up, I had acted in all of my high school's theater productions. When I went off to college I decided not to get involved in theater because I knew what a time drain it was, and I wanted to “focus on my studies.” (my parents would be so proud. They probably are now saying, “What the heck happened??”) So, at college, I did not audition for or get involved in any performing arts groups.

After hanging out with my new college friends, one of them — his name is Matt, and he will never let me forget this story — suggested I try out for the university's improv troupe.

“Improv?” I said. “I don't do improv. I've always done scripted work. I don't think my humor would translate to improv.”

Yes, that was me saying, “yes, but I don't think I'd be any good at it.” Crazy.

What's truly ridiculous about my “yes, but” is that ***I had never even seen the improv group perform!*** I didn't really know what improv comedy was, but I knew it wasn't right for me. Like I said, I can be dense.

Matt, however, was an annoyingly persistent guy (thank goodness for that). He kept suggesting it to me, and every time he did, I would brush him off with a “no,” or a resounding, “yes, but.”

Finally, in a stroke of either sheer absurdity or sheer brilliance, he maneuvered me into going to see a show. It was almost like a romantic comedy; his friend was coming into town for a weekend, but Matt was busy Saturday night. Matt asked if I could hang with his friend so he wouldn't be bored. Being a good guy, I said, “sure,” after which Matt slyly mentioned that the improv group happened to be having a show that night and we should go see it. Sneaky bastard...

We went to see the improv show, and within just a few minutes, I was hooked! I loved it, and really wanted to give it a try. When they held auditions a month later I tried out, got in, and improv has been a part of my life ever since.

To say that my life would be different if I had not finally said, “Yes, And” to auditioning for that improv group would be a gross understatement. I cannot imagine what my life would be like. In truth, I don't even want to imagine what my life would be like.

All because I finally stopped saying “yes, but” and said, “Yes, And.”

EVERYTHING YOU HAVE IS A RESULT OF SAYING “YES, AND”

I am not trying to brag when I say that everything I have came from saying, “Yes, And.” If you think about it, everything you have is a result of saying, “Yes, And” too.

Try this exercise: Take a piece of paper and draw a line vertically down the middle of it. On the left side, write down everything you have accomplished, everything you are good at, and everything you are proud of. On the right side, right down everything you wish you had done, everything you would like to be

better at, and everything you consider a “failure.”

Got your lists done? Good.

If you look at the left side of the page, you’ll see that everything there came about because you said, “Yes, And.” The right side of the page, the side of limitations, came about (or didn’t come about) because you said, “yes, but.”

You’ve already learned this lesson. Now it’s time to apply it.

YOUR LIFE IS NOTHING BUT A SERIES OF MOMENTS

In my improv comedy story above, my life changed for the better because in one moment, I said, “Yes, And” instead of “yes, but.” In that story, I kept missing moments and stayed trapped in my “yes, but” world. Fortunately, I had annoyingly persistent people who kept throwing new moments at me until I finally said, “Yes, And.”

I was immensely lucky. So often you don’t get multiple chances. A moment hits and you have a choice of whether to say, “Yes, And” or “yes, but.” If you say, “yes, but,” that moment may very well be gone forever.

If I had not finally said “Yes, And” to attending that improv show, and later to auditioning for the group, my life would be drastically different. Everything that has happened in my life follows logically from that moment. I shudder to think what life would be like now if I had let it pass.

Our lives are long events that stretch over years and decades. However, when you think about it, our lives are nothing but a series of moments. Right now is a moment. And in fact, life is nothing but this moment right now. You cannot change the past or control the future; you can only act in this moment.

Since our lives are a series of moments, the quality of our lives is ultimately the result of how we act in each of those moments. Say, “yes, but” and your life will be a series of self-limiting beliefs

and defeats. Say, “Yes, And” and you create a life of progress, opportunity, and success.

OPPORTUNITY IS LIKE A DOOR TO DOOR SALESMAN

Opportunity knocks on your door, and if you don’t open it then opportunity moves on and knocks on the next door. It doesn’t keep pounding on your door for years until you wise up and answer.

I learned this lesson when some of my competitors chose to say, “yes, but,” to an opportunity.

In the early days of my business, I got involved in the National Speakers Association. The group held meetings where experts from different fields would come in and share their experience and wisdom about the speaking business with us.

After one such meeting, I volunteered to give the presenter a ride back to the airport. Over the course of that 40 minute car ride, we realized we had some similar interests and decided we should try working together.

I was pretty new to the business, and he was well established, so this was a huge opportunity for me. I jumped at the chance.

A few days later I called him up on the phone and we chatted about how we could partner. Two months later I flew out to Las Vegas and we recorded a training DVD together. Since that time, we have continued to create products, run coaching programs, and deliver presentations together. That one moment turned into a terrific personal and business relationship.

What’s interesting is that he told me I was not the first person he had made this offer to. In fact, he said he had made a similar offer to four other people in the past, but none of them followed up or did anything about it. Though I never spoke to any of those people about why they didn’t follow through, I am pretty confident assuming that “yes, but” reared its ugly head.

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Do want your entire company, association, or organization to benefit from the immense power of saying, “Yes, And”? Then let Avish bring the power of “Yes, And!” to your group.

For more information about his speaking, training, and consulting options, visit www.SayYesAnd.com.

VOLUME ORDERS

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Why not buy them all their own copy of, “Say, ‘Yes, And!’”?

For information on volume orders, visit www.SayYesAnd.com



ABOUT AVISH

Avish Parashar is an experienced, innovative, energetic, and humorous speaker who uses his 20+ years of experience performing, teaching and studying improv comedy to show organizations and individuals how to deal with the unexpected quickly, effectively, and with a sense of humor.

Avish is the author of "Improvise to Success!" and has created dozens of other products on applying improv skills to business and life.

For more information, please contact Avish directly:

484-366-1793

avish@avishparashar.com

www.SayYesAnd.com