

# 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment

Do Not "Should" on Yourself or Others

## The Reason:

Should statements directed toward yourself contribute to reduced confidence and lower self-worth.

Should-ing on yourself reduces your overall enjoyment of life.

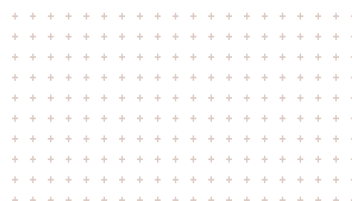
Should statements directed toward others lead to frustration and anger because other people rarely, if ever, behave the way we think they should.

Other words I call cousins to Should include: Have to, Got to, Need To, Must, Ought. A more distant cousin is a statement that starts with "If only..."

- this evokes regret about what we think should have happened or what we should have done or said.

**Note:** The same reactions hold true when we use shouldn't.

I shouldn't have said that. Or, she shouldn't have done that.

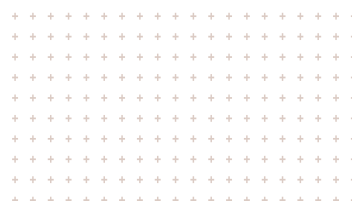


**Reminder:**

Think about how it feels when you try to express your feelings to someone and they respond with, “You should .....” You glaze over or get irritated. At best, you don’t feel listened to and you often think about all the ways why what they just said won’t work. At worst, an argument erupts.

By the same token, think about how it feels when that ONE friend (we all have at least one) who continuously complains about the same thing over and over and over and over. We know exactly what they should do, right? We tell them, yet they never do it. Exasperating!

Lastly, telling yourself you should go to the gym or you shouldn’t binge watch Netflix until three in the morning awakens the little rebel in your brain. The rebel throws a tantrum saying, “I don’t HAVE to do what you say. You aren’t the boss of me!” You end up not going to the gym OR you are tired at work the next day and you are irritated with yourself.



## Reining in the Rebel

When changing your self-shoulding replace should (and cousins) with want. Using the word want quiets the rebel in your brain and opens you up to make a choice. The brain is wired to get us what we want.

You are more likely to exercise if you say something like, "I want to exercise today." Putting exercise in terms of want just feels better. There's a small nanosecond after you say you want something when your brain stops and considers it. It's in that small amount of time when you get off autopilot and truly choose to exercise (or get the gym bag ready to take with you so you can hit that Zumba class after work).

**Remember:** You can't trick yourself. Saying you want to do something you don't want to do will backfire. In that case, skip ahead to the result you want and work backward.



Example: Most people don't want to do the dishes. Everyone, however, wants a clean kitchen. Ask yourself, 'Do I want a clean kitchen?' If the answer is yes, then you say, 'I am going to do the dishes, so I can get what I want (the clean kitchen).' If the answer is no, then you say to yourself, 'I accept the consequences of a messy kitchen and am not going to should on myself or feel badly for choosing to couch-surf right now.'

**What to Do When You Get Should On:**

When Others should on you, take a deep breath, and remind yourself they don't know the 11th Commandment. If it's not time to share this wisdom with that person, smile and thank them for the ideas.

Example: "Thanks for the input. I'll give it some thought."

**Remember:** Trying to tell that person why their suggestions won't work opens space for confrontation, frustration, etc.



## How to Not Should on Others:

Rather than saying, “You should do xyz,” ask the other person an open-ended question. Open-Ended Questions require an answer that is not yes or no.

Example: “How do you see this playing out?”

**Remember:** Ultimately people want to be heard and to feel like you get them. Sometimes it’s most effective to say to that constant complainer, “Yep, that really sucks. I am sorry that’s happening. But I know you’ll figure it out.”

## Additional Resources:

Playing Big by Tara Mohr - the final chapter has a different antidote to should.

Feeling Good and Feeling Good Together, both by David Burns, MD – texts on how to change your thoughts.

