



BROKEN RECORD TECHNIQUE

Introduction

The *Broken Record* technique (also sometimes called the *Scratched Record* technique) is described by Manuel J Smith in his book *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty*. The name for the technique comes from the days when vinyl records were used to play music. If a record got scratched you would find that the same phrase of a song or piece of music would keep repeating over and over again. The *Broken Record* technique encourages you to emulate this repetition in situations where you want to make it clear to someone that you are serious about something, and to try to get your point across by reasserting a request or point repeatedly, notwithstanding attempts by the person you are talking to deflect you or get you to change your mind

Note: When using the technique, it is important to *stay calm* in the way that you repeat your point. This helps to show that you are not being aggressive, but simply firm and clear.

The technique

- Saying NO!
- Buy yourself the time you need to be assertive (or if you're not sure how you feel about a task). When someone asks you to do something say you'll think about it.
- Don't make excuses and don't give reasons: just say no. For example, you could say 'No, I am sorry but I can't' or 'No, I can't do it this time' or just 'No, I'm sorry'. This is called the 'broken record' technique and is especially good for those situations where you're absolutely sure you don't want to do what you've been asked. Keeping your response this brief is a reflection of the fact that you don't need permission for your decision. You don't have to persuade anyone that your decision is the right one.
- Sometimes you'll want to show you appreciate being asked even though you're not able to help. So, you might say, 'It's kind of you to ask me, but I can't' or 'Thank for thinking of me, but I'd rather not.'
- Be sympathetic and constructive. Tell the person you see their problem and help them to think through possible solutions – as long as they don't involve you, of course!
- Explain why you can't help. But don't fall into the trap of sounding as if you are making excuses. Remember: you have a valid reason for your decision and you don't need anyone approval.
- Sometimes you might want to meet the person half way: 'I can't do x, but I might be able to help you with y.'