

"No" has consequences

By [MaryAnn McKibben Dana](#)

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It's been a wonderful summer—our family's trip to Iona, Scotland was over-the-moon wonderful—but it's good to be back into a routine. I put my lastborn child on the school bus this week. I won't lie, there were a couple of happy mommy tears as he waved from the second seat and rumbled away.

[I wrote earlier in the summer](#) about creating a "to-don't" list, and have been working on identifying things that I can let go of, either by delegating or just leaving them undone. The idea is to free up time and mental space for those things that are more important.

Our family has a big to-don't on tap this fall... we're giving up Girl Scouts.

This one hurts. I am a big believer in scouting. I was a Girl Scout. My mother was my Girl Scout leader, and I was a co-leader for Caroline's troop last year. Margaret has been patiently waiting for her turn to join. Instead, we will be a Scout-free household for the next year, perhaps longer. I won't bore you with the reasons, nor with the list of what's on our plates instead. Suffice to say, this is the right thing for us right now.

On one level it feels great: No meetings. No cookies. No weekends jammed with field trips and badge work.

But it's also agonizing. No rocketry or horseback riding. No camping. No intentional leadership development of our girls. Yes, they could potentially get that kind of experience in other ways. But how? And what are the consequences if they don't?

Time management experts (and Sabbath practitioners) sometimes make saying "No" sound simple, as if all that stands between you and a simpler life is to let the unimportant stuff go. But the values of the Girl Scouts are important.

When we say No, we are trusting a bigger Yes.

But that's easier said than done.

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