



# OUR WORLD, OUR STORIES



Dave Rear

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## Our World, Our Stories

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## To Teachers and Students

Welcome to *Our World, Our Stories*. This textbook delves into the fascinating subjects that shape our contemporary landscape. From groundbreaking scientific discoveries to evolving cultural trends and the challenges of today's global societies, it covers an array of topics designed to spark curiosity and encourage critical thinking. Each unit aims to provoke thoughtful discussions and equip students with a broader understanding of the world around them.

The book is divided into four sections of five units each. We begin with *Economy and Work*, where we learn about companies that have banned meetings, the rise of the four-day work week, and the secrets of Red Bull marketing. Then we move onto *Humans and Society*. What are the advantages and disadvantages of tourism? Is it better to know what will happen or to be uncertain? What's it like to walk around the world? In the third section, we turn to *Media and Entertainment*. We ask whether video games can be good for us, why we can't always trust newspapers, and how Disney managed to take over the world. In the final section, *Science and Technology*, we delve into topics as diverse as the spooky science of ghosts, the miracle of the James Webb Space Telescope, and the fledgling technology of living robots. Whatever your particular interest, you're sure to learn something new.

To engage the students and extend their language skills, the textbook contains a variety of activities to complete in and out of class. Each unit begins with a short discussion to introduce the major theme. Then there are a pair of comprehension exercises to test the students' understanding of the main reading. This is followed by a vocabulary exercise to cover essential words and then a short summary and listening. The unit ends with a longer discussion and writing activity in which students express their opinions about the topic.

I hope you enjoy teaching and studying with the book. Best of luck!

Dave Rear

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# Pressure to Please

*Why can't we say no?*

## Introduction

Have you ever been asked to do something you didn't want to do, but, instead of refusing, found yourself saying yes? If so, you're not alone. Research has shown that it is very difficult for human beings to say no, even if we are asked to do something unethical. Why is this?

## Activate Your Thinking

Think about the following questions and share your ideas with your classmates.

1. Have you ever said yes to something you didn't want to do?

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2. Why do you think it is hard for people to say no to requests?

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## Reading



Read the passage and check that you understand the underlined words.



When Takashi's boss at his fast-food restaurant asked him to work an extra shift to cover an absent co-worker, Takashi knew he should say no. He had end-of-term exams coming up at his university and, while the extra money from his part-time job was always welcome, his studies were his main priority. He hesitated before answering, hoping his pained expression would be enough for his boss to understand his feelings. But, at the same time, he also knew his boss wouldn't have asked him unless it was necessary. After all, the restaurant had to stay open no matter how short-staffed it was. Slowly, he found himself nodding his head. "Sure, just one extra shift would be okay, I guess," he replied. His boss's grateful smile told him how much his sacrifice meant.



Many of us have been in Takashi's situation, whether it is being asked to work an extra shift or carry out some other task we aren't happy about doing. It is that feeling of wanting to say no but somehow finding ourselves agreeing to it instead. Why do we find it so difficult to refuse a request? For the past 15 years, a social psychologist at Cornell University in the United States named Vanessa Bohns has been trying to find out.



Her work builds on an experiment carried out in the 1970s by Ellen Langer at Harvard University. In Langer's study, participants were told to go to the university library and attempt to cut in line for the photocopier. Langer wanted to know how many people would allow someone to go in front of them. Her results were interesting. If the participant gave a reason for cutting in line, over 94 percent of people allowed them to go ahead, compared to 60 percent when the participant offered no excuse at all. The reason they gave, however, didn't have to be a good one. Even if the participant simply said they "needed to make some copies," which isn't an excuse at all, people agreed to let them do it. The experiment suggested that we are willing to agree to a request with only the smallest amount of encouragement.



Bohns's own research confirmed Langer's results. In one experiment, she had

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participants approach strangers and ask them to complete a survey. The participants predicted they would have to ask at least four people to get a response, but in fact it was closer to two. In another study, they asked a stranger to walk them to a nearby gym, explaining they couldn't find it. To their surprise, they found that one in two people agreed to help, even though

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1-07

We might interpret these results positively as a sign of basic human kindness. But in some of Bohns's other studies, a darker side was seen. Participants in one study were told to approach strangers with the following request: "Hi, I'm trying to play a prank on someone, but they know my handwriting. Will you write the word 'pickle' on the page of this library book?" Bohns did not expect anyone to agree to vandalize the book, but despite raising some objections, more than half the people agreed to do it. This finding was repeated in other studies when, for example, strangers were asked to falsify academic documents.

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1-08

Bohns drew two conclusions from her work. First, people are surprisingly willing to agree to a request even if it is clearly an unethical act; and second, we tend to underestimate our power to persuade other people to do what we want. We don't think about their fear of embarrassment and assume they will be courageous enough to refuse. In reality, however, human beings are a social species, and they naturally try to avoid things that might damage their relationships with others. By refusing a request, we risk that the other person will feel humiliated, or, as they say in psychology, "lose face," and so we try hard to stop that from happening. And in Bohns's studies, remember, the participants were all of equal status. Refusing a request that comes from someone higher in the hierarchy – a boss or teacher, for example – is even harder.

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1-09

The lesson here is not necessarily that we should all be braver to say no; it is that we have to be careful how we request things of others. We need to give people room to reject things they don't want to do. It is easier, for example, to say no over email than face to face or over the phone, so consider approaching people in writing first. Or, if you feel it is more polite to talk face to face, ask for their response later rather than straightaway. "You can give the person a little more space to gather their thoughts," advises Bohns.

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Would Takashi have refused his boss's request if it had been expressed in a different way? We might never know, but getting people to do things they feel uncomfortable with is not a good way to build a positive, long-term relationship. Our power to influence people is much stronger than we assume.

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## NOTES

**pained expression** 苦痛にゆがんだ表情    **social psychologist** 社会心理学者    **cut in line** 順番を抜かす, 列に割り込む    **interpret** 解釈する    **play a prank** いたずらをする    **vandalize** 落書きする  
**raise an objection** 異議を唱える    **falsify** 偽造する    **unethical** 非倫理的    **underestimate** 過少評価する  
**feel humiliated** 屈辱を感じる    **lose face** 面目を失う    **hierarchy** ヒエラルキー, 段階的組織

## Reading Comprehension

Decide if each sentence is true or false.

- [T / F] Takashi agreed to work an extra shift even though he was unhappy about it.
- [T / F] People agree with requests only if a good reason is given.
- [T / F] Bohns was surprised how many people agreed to damage the library book.
- [T / F] People tend to underestimate how difficult it is to refuse a request.
- [T / F] It should be considered rude to send a request by email.

## Finding Details

Write down the answer to each question.

- What were participants in Ellen Langer's study told to do in the university library?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Around what percentage of people agreed to show participants to the gym?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- What term in psychology is used to describe a feeling of humiliation?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Extend Your Vocabulary

Choose the correct word from the list to complete each sentence.

priority    hesitate    courageous    species    straightaway

1. The student got to work on her project \_\_\_\_\_.
2. My \_\_\_\_\_ is to complete this assignment before anything else.
3. Please don't \_\_\_\_\_ to contact me if you have any questions.
4. Saving that child from the river was a really \_\_\_\_\_ act.
5. The researchers discovered a new \_\_\_\_\_ of insect in the rainforest.

## Summary



Listen to the audio and fill in the spaces.

Have you ever agreed to a <sup>(1)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ even though you didn't really want to? If so, you are not alone. Through her studies, social psychologist Vanessa Bohns has shown that people do not like to <sup>(2)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to do things. In one study, for example, 94 percent of people allowed someone to cut in line for the <sup>(3)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ even if the excuse given was inappropriate. In another, over half agreed to vandalize a library book, although it was clearly an unethical act. Bohns says human beings try hard to make sure the other person doesn't lose face, and this makes them <sup>(4)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to agree to things they do not really want to do. When we make a request, therefore, we should try to <sup>(5)</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ it in such a way that the other person has room to say no.

## Expressing Your Opinion

### → Discussion

What do you think about the following statement? Think of two reasons for your opinion and share them with your classmates. Try to add details or examples and continue your conversation for as long as you can.

People in Japan care too much about how they are viewed by others.

5. Strongly Agree    4. Agree    3. Neither agree nor disagree  
2. Disagree    1. Strongly disagree

Reason 1: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reason 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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### → Paragraph Writing

Finish this short paragraph about the opinion above. Give details or examples for your reasons.

I think / don't think that people in Japan care too much about how they are viewed by others. First, \_\_\_\_\_

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