

I Don't Want To

"I don't want to."

When was the last time you heard this from an adult?

Children have no problem speaking their minds about their preferences. You'll hear this several times a day at least from a 3 year old - at least until they're shamed out of it.

Surely we adults haven't stopped *not* wanting to do things. It's just that now we've acquired the habit of bending over backwards to avoid saying what we want.

We "can't come" or "won't be able to" or "had something come up" or "have to be somewhere." If we do say "no thanks" we feel obligated to add caveats and explainers.

Sometimes these are legitimate responses. But come on: sometimes they're just our way of avoiding something we don't want to do - and avoiding the need to acknowledge that. It's understandable: people rarely want to blunt enough to say "no, I'm not interested." But it's probably unhealthy that we so rarely bring our own preferences into the picture.

It seems like we feel like we need to have unselfish reasons for everything we do - something probably learned from negative childhood reinforcement. So we rely on (or manufacture) external circumstances rather than just speak our minds. And our friends are left wondering if we don't like them or just don't like bowling.

Why isn't "not wanting to" enough?

Originally published at JamesWalpole.com.