Welcome to the Outrageous Workplace Stories series of the podcast. In these episodes, you'll see ways to handle even the toughest of workplace situations with power and impact while making humanity a priority. These stories shaped how I went from receptionist to HR manager in four short years without a degree, without the qualifications or experience that you would have thought I needed. This series is designed to help you turn everyday challenges into momentum for your next level. of staying grounded in your humanity and being true to who you are as a person is important to you. Yet, you also want to get to your next level. You want to earn more money and you want to create a professional life you're proud of. That is also at the top of your list. I'm here to tell you that you can do both. And this is where you start. Let's go. Let's talk about how to say no at work without blowing everything up. I'll share my own story. So I was working on an event. It was a very hard event. We had worked extra hours through the night sometimes. And I understood this was part of the job, but I was ready for a break afterwards. I was like, okay, this is great. We're going to take a break. Everything is going to go off. going to get the results that we want and it's going to be great. And we did. And we worked really, really hard. And then my boss. immediately sets another tight deadline for next week to start a brand new thing and barely acknowledged the work that we had done or the efforts that had been put in or the extra hours that had been worked. And at this point, was like, I was ready for a break. was expecting a break. And then it's like, oh, OK, I'm not going to get one now. And this just kind of kept happening because it was kind of the way she worked. She was like, OK, I need to present these results to my boss. So we need to get this research done. We need to get this done. And she just kept putting more stuff on my plate. And I was contemplating just quitting. I was just like, you know what? Maybe I just quit or maybe I just get sick or maybe I just find a reason to take some time off because I don't want to do. I don't want to just ramp right back into work again. And it's kind of a thing. It's like if you work in a place like that, you can have healthy work cycles where you work extra hours, but then you need to balance it out somewhere, right? You need a break. So this is a situation where I needed to say something and it was scary to say something because my boss, she was kind of strict. She had a strong presence. She was a difficult person to kind of talk to because she would always have the right thing to say back. she would always have something that was really hard to argue with back. And so it was challenging to say no. And I imagine you know how that feels when you're like, okay, like you were in my situation. If you were in my situation, you might think, oh, if I had to say no, she's probably gonna think I'm lazy. She's probably gonna think I'm not a team player. She's probably gonna tell me how hard the rest of the team is working and how I need to step up my game. and how there's really no excuse and that's just how it works around here. This is all that my brain was predicting, predicting that she was going to say all those things. And then I thought to myself that if I were to just push through and if everybody were to just push through and that's all we did, there would be a point at which somebody would burn out, it wouldn't be sustainable because that level of work isn't sustainable, right? And I know that from experience, you might know that too. And so something had to be said. So the way that this was approached, this changed things because it questioned her, but it also gave her the benefit of the doubt. And it allowed her to think about it and then come back and change her thoughts. So I went to her and I said, look, we've just wrapped up this really big event. We're all really tired. And I'm wondering if there's a good reason or like what the reason is. I'm wondering what the reason is as to why we need to start this other project immediately right away. What is the

consequence if say we give it a few days or a week or we just kind of give ourselves a little bit more time to do this more intentionally instead of rushing into having these results in within a week. And she said, well, I need to present it to my boss. And I said, okay, and what happens if you don't? I'm like, what happens if you Let your boss know that the team has been working really hard and they've been working really long hours and we need a bit of a break and we're happy to do this work. But in order to do it intentionally, in order to do it to the quality that you want, in order for us to still function effectively, um another week would really be ideal for us. What if you were to do that? I mean, just curious, not holding you to anything. You don't have to do that. Just wondering. If she thought about it, she's like, well, I don't know. I haven't really, you know, I haven't approached it. And I thought, cause honestly, this is how I'm feeling. So I don't know if the rest of the team is feeling that way, but I know that I had to say something cause I don't want to be burning out cause I know that I'm not helpful to you. I know that I'm no use to anybody. And I know that the rest of the team would be the same way. So I'm just wondering if there's anything that we can do. Maybe we can adjust the timeline. We can be a little bit more thoughtful about this. We can give ourselves a little bit more time and we can get the work done to the high caliber and quality. that you expect from us and we can keep doing it on a consistent basis. So she didn't really say much. She wasn't really happy about it at first. She was like, hmm, okay. She's like, and then she's like, I have to go. She left. Then I thought I was gonna probably be in trouble the next day. I thought, you know, she didn't say yes or no. She just kind of left it. And the next day, to my surprise, she actually came up to me and she's like, you know what? I did think about what you said. I think you're right. Well, I don't think this is an unreasonable deadline. She said, I do agree that we have just finished something and we have just put in a lot of time and effort and that I can't risk the team burning out. That's not what I'm, that's not my intention. So let's move it a couple or she's like, what she said was, what do you think a reasonable deadline would be for this? let's come up with a compromise. And so we did. And that, my friend, is how you say no without blowing everything up. And it's not just saying no. It's asking questions. Did you notice that? It was, what would happen if we did it this way? Just curious, not holding you to it, no pressure, just wondering. What would happen if... you know, we had a little bit of a celebration first before we moved right into the next thing. What would be the worst that happens if? That's one of my favorite questions. And it just makes people think, right? Because my boss, while she was a pusher, she wanted to get things done, she was a results driver. She did not want to push people to their breaking point. She did not want people burning out on her watch. She did not want... to demand more than was reasonable of people. And she knew she had a hardworking, good team and she didn't want to risk that. And surprisingly enough, a big reason why people don't get promoted and why they actually get denied for the promotion is because they said yes to too many things, because they kept saying yes, because they burnt themselves out, because they weren't willing to prioritize. or bring up those difficult conversations when they needed to. And that comes to the point where you're at the breaking point and you don't even realize that it was you that got yourself there in the first place because there was a moment in time when you could have said something and you didn't know how or you didn't even think you could or you didn't consider it. And by then it's usually too late. You're in too deep. You've over-promised. You're not able to deliver or you're just burning yourself out to the point where you're no use to anybody anyway. So there you go my friend, you insane know-it-work without blowing everything up. I will see

you in the next video. I hope that was helpful. If you enjoyed that story and you gleaned something from it, if you want to learn how to master your professional life while being both impactful yet deeply human, join the waitlist for professionally human. The link is in the show notes. I can't wait for you to see what I have in store.