REPLACE 'I CAN'T' WITH 'I DON'T'

"I don't say 'I can't'." – **Derek Franklin**

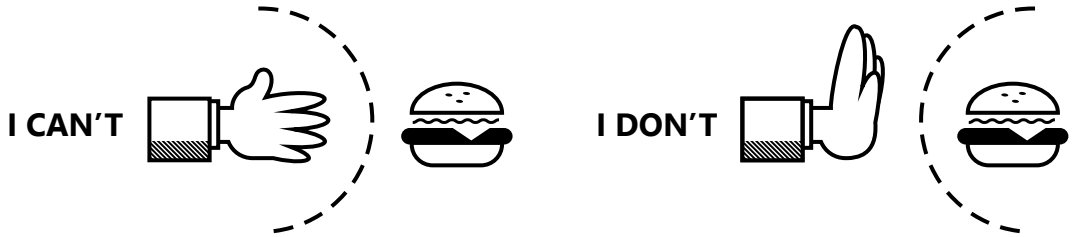
Express It

SPEAK IT

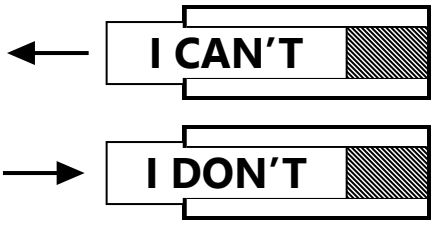
Speak what's below *out loud*, with enthusiasm, certainty, and belief. **Improvise** what you say as *much* as you want (actually, this is preferred). **Visualize** what you say - see it in your head before the words leave your lips. **Brackets** contain instructions that explain something specific to do.

What, Why, and How

- The words you use - even those that *seem* insignificant - help shape your personal sense of power and control.
- *Don't* and *can't* may seem somewhat interchangeable, but they are very different from a psychological standpoint. **CAN'T ≠ DON'T**
- Saying '*I can't*' to a temptation, distraction, or demand feels like a restriction or limitation. Saying '*I don't*' feels like - and IS - a choice. For example:
  - Saying: '*I can't eat junk food*' implies that you kind of want to eat junk food, but something restricts or limits you from doing it. Saying: '*I don't eat junk food*' implies that *not* eating junk food is **your choice** - you decided that it's not something you do and it's not part of who you are.



- Saying '*I don't*' do something is like saying that it isn't part of your identity or self-image, which can be a powerful way of saying *'no'* to unwanted temptations, demands, and distractions that don't align with your beliefs, values, and goals.
- Saying '*I can't*' is a psychologically draining way of saying no.
- Saying '*I don't*' is a psychologically empowering way of saying no.
- **Heidi Grant Halvorson** is right when she says: '*I don't' is experienced as a choice, so it feels empowering. It's an affirmation of your determination and willpower. 'I can't' isn't a choice. It's a restriction, it's being imposed upon you. So thinking 'I can't' undermines your sense of power and personal agency.*
- Saying '*I can't*' repeatedly to temptations, demands, and distractions is a constant reminder of limitations, and can affect your self-image in subtle ways. Saying '*I don't*' repeatedly is a reminder of the power and control that you have in the decisions you make and behaviors you act on.
- When appropriate, you replace '*I can't*' with '*I don't*':
  - **Instead of saying:** *I can't miss exercising*, **you say:** *I don't miss exercising*
  - **Instead of saying:** *I can't afford that*, **you say:** *I don't need that right now*
  - **Instead of saying:** *I can't go tonight*, **you say:** *I don't want to go tonight - other things have priority*
  - **Instead of saying:** *I can't check Twitter/Facebook while I'm working*, **you say:** *I don't check Twitter/Facebook while I'm working*



- You say '*I don't*' when you find yourself in situations in life when the choice you should make is *'no!'*

EXPLAIN IT

- Explain how you will use '*I don't*' to handle various situations that you experience in life. For example:
  - **How you refuse an unhealthy food:** When you're tempted to eat unhealthy food, you say, [describe how you will use *'I don't'* to say *'no'*].
  - **How you say no to a request of your time, energy, or resources:** When you want to say no to a request of your time, energy, or resources, you say [describe how you will use *'I don't'* to say *'no'*].