

# The Yes, And Starting Point Guide

## A Practical Companion to *Say "Yes, And!" to Change*

**Start Here: You Don't Need a Rollout. You Need Your First Step.**

After reading the book, the biggest question isn't whether "Yes, And" works. It's: Where do I begin?

This guide will help you choose your starting point based on your reality, not some idealized version of how change should happen.

Here's what you don't need:

- A formal launch
- A company-wide announcement
- A training program
- A culture transformation plan

What you do need: An honest starting place and a small first step.



## Decide Where to Start

Before you introduce this to anyone else, ask yourself an uncomfortable question: *How good am I at this already?*

One of the most common reactions I hear after speaking is some version of: "This is great. My boss needs this." or "My team needs this." or "My employees need this."

They might. But sometimes we're not as honest with ourselves as we could be.

If you're not consistently modeling the behaviors—yielding to reality, catching your own "yes, but" reflex, noticing and navigating emotion, starting small instead of controlling—then your starting point is you. Not your team. Not your organization. You.

If you're already strong in these behaviors, then you can begin introducing the framework to others. But if you're still developing your own practice, that's actually great news. You'll learn faster by doing it yourself first, and you'll lead with more credibility when you eventually bring others along.

## If You're in the Middle of a Major Change

Start there. Apply the framework to what's most pressing. Real change in real time is the best laboratory.

## If You Have the Luxury of Time

Start with a smaller, receptive group. Research on how change spreads shows that you don't need everyone on board from day one. You need about 15-20% to reach a tipping point.

Don't start with your biggest problem area, the team that fights you on everything, or the most resistant department. That will drain you. Start where energy already exists. Let it spread from there.



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## You Do Not Have to Do the Steps in Order

The YES AND Framework is a circle, not a staircase. You can begin anywhere.

Choose your entry point using one of these three questions:

- Which step feels most urgent right now?
- Which step would create the biggest impact?
- Which step excites me most to try?

Momentum often follows energy, so pay attention to what you're actually drawn to rather than what you think you *should* do first.

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## What This Looks Like in a Real Meeting

It starts in your head, not in the room.

The first practice is internal: catching your "yes, but." When your reflex is to criticize, to correct, to explain why something won't work—pause. Ask yourself three questions:

- Am I adding to this?
- Am I supporting this person?
- Or am I cutting them down?

Sometimes the simplest practice is literal. Start your next response with the actual words "Yes, And..." It might feel forced at first. That's fine. Yes, it's a mindset, but using the words builds the reflex. You're training a new muscle.



One thing to watch for: if psychological safety is already low, criticism (even when intended as improvement) can shut people down even further. In those situations, build support first. Lead with what's working before you redirect.

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## How to Avoid Turning This Into "Another Initiative"

You don't need posters. You don't need slogans. You need modeling.

The fastest way to kill this idea is to dictate it while not practicing it yourself. If people sense you're not doing it, they'll disengage immediately. They've seen that movie before.

Instead:

- Model it in your own responses
- Catch "yes, but" when it shows up (in yourself and others)
- Redirect gently when you notice it
- Reinforce when you see people practicing "Yes, And"

If you want a kickoff moment, that's fine. But the culture shift happens in the follow-up behavior, not the announcement.

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## If Your Team Is Exhausted

Do not add this on top of everything else.

If you want people to have energy for "Yes, And," you need to remove something else first. Ask: What can we stop? What can we delay? What can we simplify?

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Then involve them in the decision. Don't say, "Here's the framework and here's what we're doing." Instead ask: What feels most doable? What feels most important? What feels most energizing?

Autonomy builds energy. Start small and let them choose how to engage.

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## If There Is Cynicism or Low Trust

"Yes, And" can't thrive in environments with low psychological safety. But it can help build it.

Here's what I've learned: Cynicism often grows from being "yes, butted" for too long. People stop contributing because their ideas get shot down, their concerns get dismissed, and their reality gets ignored. The pattern becomes self-reinforcing.

If trust is low, start at the top. Notice how you respond to input. Stop jumping on mistakes. Stop dismissing concerns before fully hearing them. Say "Yes, And" before correcting or redirecting.

Then take small, visible actions based on what people tell you. **This is critical.** People need to see that their input leads to something tangible, even if it's small.

Don't announce a transformation. Just experiment. Let the results speak.

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## Run It as a 30- to 90-Day Experiment

Do not execute a plan. Run experiments.

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I recommend using the AAA model from the book: Act, Analyze, Adjust.

Choose a timeframe (30, 60, or 90 days). At regular intervals, ask:

- What did we try?
- What worked?
- What didn't?
- What do we adjust?

Iteration beats perfection. If nothing changes after a reasonable period, change your approach. Experimentation is the Yes, And way.

This is also where I find that outside support can be valuable. It's hard to see your own patterns when you're inside them. If you're trying to shift culture or implement this across teams and you're not seeing the traction you hoped for, it might be time to bring in a fresh perspective. (More on that at the end of this guide.)

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## **If You Could Only Do One Thing This Month**

### **If this is personal for you:**

Explore and express your core. Journal about it. Dig deeper into your inner "yes, but"—the voice that tells you you're not enough or that your strengths don't matter. Name the strength you've been ignoring or downplaying.

Then take one small step to express it. Not a big dramatic gesture. Just one thing.

### **If you lead others:**



Practice letting go of control. Ask more questions. Notice emotion in yourself and others. Listen fully before responding. Invite small steps instead of demanding complete solutions.

Most importantly: say "Yes, And" to their answers before you improve them. Sit with the discomfort of not jumping in immediately. That pause is where the magic happens.

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## When You Might Need Support

Most people can start practicing "Yes, And" on their own with what's in the book and this guide. But there are times when bringing in outside help accelerates the process and helps you avoid common pitfalls.

You might benefit from working with me if:

- You're trying to implement this across multiple teams or an entire organization
- You're facing significant resistance or deeply entrenched patterns
- You need help designing experiments that fit your specific context
- You want an outside perspective on where you're getting stuck
- You're seeing some progress but plateauing and can't figure out why

I work with leaders and teams to implement "Yes, And" in ways that stick. Sometimes that's a half-day workshop. Sometimes it's ongoing coaching as you navigate real changes in real time. Sometimes it's helping you design the right experiments for your context.

If you're curious about what that might look like, you can reach out to me at [avish@avishparashar.com](mailto:avish@avishparashar.com) or visit [AvishParashar.com](http://AvishParashar.com). I'm also sharing ideas, examples, and stories from organizations putting this into practice in my newsletter. If



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## Final Thought

You do not need a perfect plan.

You need an honest starting point, a small experiment, and a willingness to adjust as you learn. Change doesn't require certainty. It requires the right first move.

What's yours going to be?