

You Can't Have Balance



Without Boundaries

Setting Boundaries: Why It Matters and How to Do It

Introduction to Boundaries: Definition and Importance

Boundaries are essential for maintaining a healthy balance between personal needs and the demands of others. They protect your well-being and ensure respectful interactions.

- **Boundaries Are Clear Limits That Define Your Needs and Personal Space—Both Physical and Energetic—From Others**
 - By the limits you set, you protect the integrity of your day, your energy and spirit, the health of your relationships, and the pursuits of your heart.
 - They are essential for maintaining a healthy relationship with yourself and those around you.
- **Boundaries Are Like a Membrane That Keeps an Organism Intact**
 - A cell membrane preserves the integrity of an organism. Just as each cell is encased by a membrane that defines its boundaries and regulates what enters and exits, your boundaries function similarly in your life.
 - Consider your front door as a metaphor for these boundaries. You don't leave your front door wide open 24/7 and while you are sleeping, allowing anyone to enter freely, regardless of who they are. Instead, you open the door selectively, welcoming those you trust and recognize while keeping it closed to protect yourself and safeguard your well-being ensuring you have control over who and what has access to you.
- **Boundaries Let Positive Things Go Through and Keep Harmful Things Out** (*Where to Draw the Line: How to Set Healthy Boundaries Every Day* by Anne Katherine).
 - This book offers guidance on setting and maintaining personal boundaries in various aspects of life, helping readers recognize and protect their limits to foster healthier relationships and self-respect.
- **Boundaries Are a Crucial Aspect of Self-Care**
 - They help prevent resentment, regulate your nervous system, and foster a sense of safety within your body, your relationships, and your overall environment.

Using the Yin Yang symbol to represent boundaries conveys the importance of finding balance and maintaining a harmonious interaction between personal limits and external demands.

Types of Boundaries

- **Work Boundaries**
 - **School Boundaries**
 - **Personal Boundaries**
 - **Emotional Boundaries**
 - **Mental Boundaries**
 - **Technology and Social Media Boundaries**
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Why Is It So Hard to Set Boundaries? The Root of the Issue

Many of us grow up believing we need to be accommodating to others, driven by a fear of abandonment and the need for approval.

Many of us grow up believing we need to be convenient and accommodating to others.

We are taught that being a "good child" means not needing much and making everyone happy while expressing needs or emotions labels us as "bad."

This fear of abandonment and the need for approval often drive our people-pleasing behaviors.

Common Fears Around Setting Boundaries

When it comes to setting boundaries, many people experience common fears that can make the process challenging:

- **Fear of not being loved:** Worrying that setting boundaries might lead to rejection or a loss of affection.
- **Fear of being judged or Misunderstood:** Concern that others will misinterpret your intentions or think poorly of you.
- **Fear of loss or abandonment:** Anxiety about losing relationships or being left alone if you set boundaries.
- **Fear of hurting someone:** Worrying that your boundaries might cause emotional pain to others.
- **Guilt or shame:** Feeling bad about putting your needs first or setting limits.
- **Fear of being controlling:** Concern that setting boundaries might come across as trying to control others.
- **Feeling frozen or paralyzed:** Experiencing overwhelm or indecision when trying to set boundaries.

Remember, you are no longer a child dependent on others (parents, caregivers) for survival. You are your caregiver now. Don't abandon yourself. Always ask, "What do I need right now?" instead of only focusing on others' needs.

The Price of Not Setting Boundaries and Constantly Putting Others' Needs Before Your Own

Relying On Others' Opinions for Self-Worth

- **Dependence on External Approval:**
 - Leaves you feeling good only when others are happy with you and bad when they are not.
 - This often leads to overworking, overcommitting, and neglecting self-care due to fear of abandonment or displeasing others.

Consequences of Not Setting Boundaries

- **Anger:**
 - Frustration from unmet needs and over-commitment.
 - **Frustration:**
 - Overworking and neglecting your own needs.
 - **Burnout:**
 - Exhaustion from constant people-pleasing and overcommitment.
 - **Resentment:**
 - Growing bitterness from unmet personal needs.
 - **Neglecting Yourself:**
 - Sends a message to others that it's acceptable to disregard your needs.
 - **Loss of Identity:**
 - Difficulty recognizing your values and priorities, leading to questions like "Who am I?"—a reflection on Socrates' advice to "Know thyself."
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The Solution: Setting and Communicating Boundaries

While setting boundaries might feel uncomfortable at first, establishing and communicating them is essential for safeguarding, maintaining, and cultivating self-respect and well-being.

Effective boundaries involve clear, direct communication, backed by consistent actions, to guide how others should interact with you, indicating what is acceptable and appropriate.

FROM UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES:

- **Non-Existent/Loose Porous Boundaries:**
 - Compulsive people-pleasing
 - Self-worth dependent on others' opinions
 - Difficulty saying "no"
 - Tendency to overshare private information
 - Chronic fixer, helper, or rescuer
- **Rigid/"Brick Wall" Boundaries:**
 - Limited intimate or close relationships
 - Chronic fear of rejection
 - Emotional detachment
 - Reluctance to ask for help

TO HEALTHY, SELF-HONORING BOUNDARIES:

- **Flexible and Balanced Boundaries:**
 - Aware of and value personal values

- Effectively communicates needs to others
 - Share personal information appropriately
 - Confidently says "no" when necessary and respects others' boundaries as well
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Setting Boundaries Is a Journey with Different Stages

Boundaries are not black and white.

There's no linear progression from one stage to the next. Instead, you'll continually move in and out of different stages, making the process fluid and dynamic.

This awareness can make it easier to accept the challenges and normalize the **MESSINESS** we all experience when learning to set boundaries.

Understanding these stages can help you identify where you might be stuck or what fears you might have about setting boundaries.

1. Awareness: Realizing Your Boundaries Have Been Crossed

- **Emotions:** You may feel anger, confusion, or disorientation.
- **Distance:** There might be a strong urge to distance yourself from others.
- **Feelings:** You may experience shame or a sense of exposure.
- **Exploration:** Explore the conflicting messages that prevent you from setting clear boundaries.

2. Asserting: Firmly Standing Up for Your Boundaries

- **Embrace Your Power:** Feel empowered to assert your boundaries with newfound awareness and confidence.
- **Develop New Relationships with Your Limits:** Cultivate a healthier relationship with your boundaries by consistently honoring them and recognizing their importance.
- **Expect Messiness:** This stage can be challenging and imperfect as you navigate the complexities of enforcing your limits.
- **Gain Clarity:** Understand which individuals or situations are safe, respect your boundaries and which do not.
- **Focus on Repair:** Address and repair misunderstandings or conflicts through ongoing communication and adjustment.

3. Negotiation: Bringing Flexibility and Mutuality to Boundary Setting

- **Gain Experience:** Learn to incorporate flexibility and mutual understanding as you gain experience in setting boundaries.
- **Evaluate Rigidity:** Assess whether your boundaries have become too rigid or are being used to control others.
- **Healing and Adjusting:** If you have established boundaries to protect certain emotional wounds, these boundaries may be necessary initially. However, as you work through and heal these wounds, you may find that the boundaries no longer need to be as strict. Over time, you may feel ready to expand or adjust these boundaries as you feel more secure and less vulnerable.
- **Differentiating Non-Negotiable vs. Negotiable:** You will also become more skilled at distinguishing between non-negotiable and negotiable boundaries, refining how you approach and maintain these limits.

Set Boundaries in Alignment with Your Values

Boundaries also help you live in alignment with your values by guiding both yourself and others on what is acceptable and what is not.

It's crucial to be mindful and intentional about your commitments: Before you jump into committing to saying yes, make sure you are not neglecting other important areas of your life that you value:

- **Identify What Matters Most:** Recognize your top priorities and values.
 - **Make a List of Your Values:** Include aspects such as family, sleep, health, peace, and freedom.
 - **Align Decisions with Values:** Ensure your commitments reflect and support these core values.
 - **Evaluate Each Commitment:** Consider how each decision impacts your values and overall well-being.
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Examples of Setting Boundaries by Type

1. Work Boundaries

- **Define Limits:** Clearly communicate your availability to your employer.
 - For instance, you might specify that you're not unavailable for extra shifts that disrupt your school schedule.
 - Create a list of non-negotiable work hours and communicate them clearly to colleagues and supervisors.
 - Set boundaries around responding to work emails or calls during non-work hours to prioritize personal time and reduce burnout.
- **Example:** "I'm available for work between 9 AM and 5 PM but am not able to take on additional shifts outside these hours to maintain my work-school balance."

2. School Boundaries

- **Define Limits:** Set specific study hours and stick to them. Communicate with your professors if you need extensions or accommodations due to difficulties.
- **Example:** "I dedicate 6 PM to 8 PM each evening to study and will not schedule social activities during this time. If I'm struggling, I'll proactively reach out to my professor for support."

3. Personal Boundaries

- **Define Limits:** Reserve time for yourself and your loved ones and learn to say no to commitments that overwhelm you.
- **Examples:**
 - **Healthy Eating:** If friends frequently suggest dining out, set a boundary by declining invitations to protect your health goals. "I'm focusing on healthy eating, so I'll pass on dining out this time."
 - **Social Interactions:** Face the discomfort of potentially feeling abandoned, knowing that supportive friends will respect your choices. "I need to focus on my personal time tonight, but let's plan something for another day."
 - Setting boundaries helps attract people who align with your values.

4. Emotional Boundaries


- **Define Limits:** Recognize that you can't be the sole emotional support for others, nor can they be that for you. Setting these boundaries is crucial for maintaining your mental health.
- **Example:** "I'm here to support you, but I also need time to process my own emotions. Let's check in again after I've had some time for myself."

5. Mental Boundaries

- **Define Limits:** Protect your mental space by avoiding excessive exposure to negativity or stressors and prioritize activities that support your mental well-being.
- **Example:** "I won't participate in discussions that leave me feeling drained. Let's talk about something positive instead."

6. **Technology and Social Media Boundaries**

- **Define Limits:** The digital world can be intrusive, so create "no phone zones" or "tech-free times" during your day, such as during meals or other shared activities.
- **Example:** "During dinner, I keep my phone off to focus on quality time with my family."

By implementing these boundaries across different areas of your life, you can **MAINTAIN BALANCE** , protect your well-being, and ensure that your **ACTIONS ALIGN WITH YOUR VALUES**.

My favorite way to give myself time to think and process the potential consequences of agreeing to something is to use the response:

"I will need to get back to you on that."

Affirmations for Various Types of Boundaries

Work Boundaries Affirmations

- "I set clear limits at work to maintain my well-being and productivity."
- "My work schedule reflects my values and personal needs."

School Boundaries Affirmations

- "I allocate time for study and personal care with respect for my limits."
- "I communicate my needs and seek support when necessary."
- "My academic responsibilities do not compromise my health and well-being."

Personal Boundaries

- "I prioritize time for myself and my loved ones."
- "I am allowed to say no to commitments that overwhelm me."
- "I choose activities that align with my values and bring me joy."

Emotional Boundaries Affirmations

- "I am not responsible for managing others' emotions or well-being."
- "I protect my emotional health by setting clear limits."
- "It is okay to step back from relationships or situations that drain me."

Mental Boundaries Affirmations

- "I protect my mental space from unnecessary stress and negativity."
- "I set limits on mentally taxing situations to maintain clarity and focus."

- “My mental well-being is a priority, and I make choices that support it.”

Technology and Social Media Affirmations

- “I set boundaries around my digital devices to maintain real-life connections.”
 - “I create tech-free times to focus on meaningful interactions.”
 - “My use of technology respects my need for peace and personal space.”
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Questions to Ask Yourself Before Saying Yes

Every time you say yes to something, you’re also saying no to something else.

1. **Can I Afford This?**
 - **Energetically:** Will this commitment drain my energy or resources?
 - Your energy is valuable currency. Think of it like money: if you wouldn’t give away \$10,000 without considering if you have it, you should apply the same consideration to your energy.
 - YOUR ENERGY IS PRICELESS GUARD IT WISELY AND ALLOCATE IT WHERE IT TRULY MATTERS.
 2. **What Is the Consequence of Saying Yes?**
 - Evaluate the potential outcomes of agreeing to this commitment.
 3. **Who or What Will Suffer If I Say Yes?**
 - Identify if any person or aspect of your life will suffer as a result of your commitment.
 4. **Will I or Anyone Suffer Negative Consequences?**
 - Consider if anyone important (e.g., children, partner, yourself) will be negatively affected by your commitment.
 - **Example:** Staying up for hours late into the night to support a friend who is constantly in crisis, at the expense of your own sleep and having work or clinical the next morning and being completely and utterly exhausted.
 5. **Is This Aligned with My Values?**
 - Reflect if saying yes is in alignment with your core values or if it's driven by a desire for validation, approval, acceptance, or fear of abandonment.
 - Will saying yes impact my sense of peace or alignment with my values?
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Practical Tips

- **Say No Without Explaining:** Practice saying, “I can’t today” without feeling the need to explain.
 - **Prioritize Yourself:** Put yourself first without guilt or apology.
 - **Self-Compassion:** Love yourself through the process of setting boundaries. Understand that being useful or doing things is not the only way to be loved.
 - **Reframe Apologies:** Instead of saying “sorry,” say “thank you.” For example, replace “Sorry I’m late” with “Thank you for waiting for me.”
 - **WEATHER THE DISCOMFORT:** Accept that some people may not like your new boundaries. Surround yourself with those who have your best interests at heart and inform them about your need for boundaries.
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Maintaining Boundaries in Various Settings: Building Confidence in Boundary-Setting

Once you've established a new boundary, it's crucial to maintain it. This involves resisting the urge to revert to old habits, which can often be the most challenging part of the process.

You might find yourself questioning your right to set boundaries, fearing that it seems selfish, impolite, or unkind, or feeling guilty about others' reactions.

It can be tempting to fall back into old habits, especially when faced with:

- **Fear and Doubt:** Uncertainty about whether you're doing the right thing.
- **Feelings of Shame, Guilt, or Selfishness:** Emotional responses that make boundary-setting feel uncomfortable.
- **The impulse to Return to Familiar Patterns:** The desire to revert to old ways of interacting.

Strategies to Strengthen Your Boundaries:

- **Rehearse Responses:** Practice how you will say no or assert your boundaries to increase your comfort and confidence.
- **Stay Firm:** Uphold your boundaries respectfully, even if others push back.

Remember: As you begin to recognize and honor your own needs, you will find greater fulfillment in your relationships and overall life, and you will experience less resentment toward others.

Affirmations for Saying No

- "I have the right to say no without feeling guilty."
 - "I respect my time and energy."
 - "Saying no allows me to focus on what truly matters."
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When Our Bucket Is Empty, We Have Nothing to Give

Remember:

Saying no isn't about rejecting others; it's about protecting your time and energy so you can focus on what truly matters. This is a crucial skill for maintaining balance and well-being in your life.

- **Book Recommendation:** *How Full Is Your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton uses the metaphor of a "bucket" to illustrate how our positive and negative experiences either fill or drain our emotional reserves. These experiences significantly influence our outlook and interactions with others.
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Reflecting on Your Decisions

- **Learn from Experience:** Take time to reflect on situations where you successfully said no and recognize the benefits it brought you.
 - **Adjust as Needed:** Continuously refine your approach to setting boundaries, making adjustments as you grow and learn.
 - **Give and Receive Graciously:** Allow yourself to both give and receive with grace and appreciation.
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Final Thoughts

Choose You!!: It's okay to say no. Remember that every yes you give means saying no to something else. Make sure your choices align with your values, so you don't neglect the important areas of your life.

Here Are Some "I Am Worthy" Affirmations for You:

1. I am worthy of love and respect.
2. I am deserving of all the good things in life.
3. I am enough just as I am.
4. I am worthy of success and happiness.
5. I am worthy of my dreams and aspirations.
6. I am deserving of positive relationships.
7. I am worthy of self-care and self-love.
8. I am worthy of inner peace and joy.
9. I am worthy of abundance and prosperity.
10. I am worthy of living a fulfilling and meaningful life.
11. I am worthy of being treated with kindness and compassion.
12. I am deserving of taking up space and using my voice.
13. I am worthy of pursuing my passions and interests.
14. I am worthy of forgiveness and letting go of past mistakes.
15. I am deserving of setting healthy boundaries for myself.
16. I am worthy of being proud of who I am.
17. I am deserving of feeling confident and empowered.
18. I am worthy of all the love and kindness I give to others.
19. I am worthy of being happy and content.
20. I am deserving of living a life that aligns with my true self.

YOUR ENERGY IS SACRED

Peace starts within us — we cannot bring to the world what we do not have to offer.

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Mental Health Resources

SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT: If your feelings are overwhelming or persistently interfere with your daily life, consider reaching out to a mental health professional for support.

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Links to an external site.** A National 24/7 confidential mental health crisis service. **Dial 988.** Visit Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio Links to an external site. for materials in Spanish.
- **Crisis Text Line Links to an external site.** 24/7 support via text. **Text HOME to 741741**
- **Alcoholics Anonymous Links to an external site.** A 12-step program for individuals who want to achieve sobriety. Meetings are free and open to anyone battling a drinking problem. Visit to find out about meeting times and locations.
- **Narcotics Anonymous Links to an external site.** A free 12-step program for individuals battling substance dependence, including alcohol. Visit to find out about meeting times and locations.
- **The National Grad Crisis Line Links to an external site.** A 24/7 helpline for graduate students. **Call (877-GRAD-HLP) (877-472-3457)**

- **National Sexual Assault Hotline Links to an external site.** A 24/7 confidential service for survivors of sexual assault. **Call (800) 656-HOPE (4673)**
- **SAMHSA Links to an external site.** (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline): A 24/7 treatment referral and information line. **Call (800) 662-HELP (4357).** Visit Línea Nacional de Ayuda de SAMHSA | SAMHSA Links to an external site. for information in Spanish.
- **Veterans Crisis Line Links to an external site.** A 24/7 confidential support line for veterans and their families. **Dial 988, then PRESS 1 or text 838255**
- **Crisis Assessment Team (mobile response team) Orange County, California - CAT / PERT (ochealthinfo.com) Links to an external site.** **Call 866-830-6011** for Individual Assessment on-location in a crisis
- **O.C. Link Links to an external site.** **Call 855-OCLINKS (855-625-4657).** A referral system that links to multiple resources for behavioral health information and public health and community services
- **Warm Line NAMI https://www.namiooc.org/ Links to an external site.** **Call 714-991-6412** for free confidential telephone service providing emotional support and resources to Orange County residents.