

BOUNDARIES

Achieving Results without Losing Yourself

When you set boundaries well, you *create space* for your biggest success.

Good boundary setting can help you get your needs met and prevent you from stretching beyond your limits physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It's a sign of self-respect.

A. What do I need to say 'no' to, so I can say 'yes' to other things?

*"No is a boundary that's like **an emotional immune system**. Your physical immune system has one primary function that biologists refer to as distinguishing "self" from "not-self". Its job is to keep out invaders such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. The immune system maintains the integrity of the body so that it can work optimally. But sometimes it makes an error and mistakes self for not-self. This results in an auto-immune condition... in which the body destroys part of itself. **That's just what we do to ourselves emotionally when we can't say no.**"*

Joan Borysenko, Ph.D. Inner Peace for Busy People

Before saying 'yes', ask yourself: Do I really want to say "Yes"?

1. Is it *worthwhile*? Does it help achieve my most purpose or most valued goals?
2. Am I *uniquely qualified* to accomplish it?
3. Do I want to do it?
 - Does it connect to a purpose and/or people I care about?
 - Does it give me energy &/or bring me joy?
4. **Is it more important than what I will have to give up?**
 - If I say "YES" to this, what am I implicitly saying "NO" to?
 - And at what cost to me and others?

If you can't say "Yes" to at least #1, #2, or 4 above, consider:

1. Is it *essential* to do? If not, drop it. If yes, but not now, postpone it.
2. If yes:
 - Can it be delegated to someone else?
 - Can it be broken into parts and shared with others?
 - Can it be reduced in size and scope?

B. Start somewhere and practice, reflect, refine, maintain, learn.

Where are you feeling stretched/stressed – in what situations and/or with which people?

1. Write down the name/situation and what bothers you.
2. Think about what you really need.
3. What action would help you get what you need?
4. Where possible, see what you can do to enable a win/win.
5. Start with something low risk. Try it, reflect on the response, refine if needed, and notice what you're learning about boundaries and yourself.
6. Think about what you'll do when a boundary is crossed. How will you maintain the boundary and the relationship? If you're upset when it happens, pause and come back to it after thinking about what you really want and how you can communicate it.

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Example:

You're working on a report that needs your full attention. Your partner pops in to ask where the oatmeal is. Your concentration is lost. This type of interruption happens often – only for a minute or two but enough to distract you.

- Your need: uninterrupted time to concentrate
- Desired behavior: 'When my office door is closed, I'd appreciate not being interrupted.'
- Win/win examples:
 - 'I'll take breaks about every 90 minutes and pop out to see you or you can send me a text and I will look at it at my break.'
 - Review the highlights of the day in the morning e.g. I need 3-4 uninterrupted hours to write my report. My afternoon is flexible and can be interrupted

C. Raise the topic with your team

In what areas do we need to establish norms that enable us to maintain boundaries e.g.:

- Hours in which you're available for work-related conversations
- Best communication channels to use
- Communication outside of work hours – ok to send email or not
- What constitutes an 'emergency' and can be handled outside of work hours

What boundaries do individual team members have that might be useful to others?

D. Build support:

Reach out to your boss, colleagues, or family/friends for help in setting boundaries.

- What are the biggest challenges – situations and/or people, work/home?
- What do they find helpful in these situations?
- What guidance do they suggest?
- How can you be mutually supportive:
 - Identifying where boundaries are needed?
 - Articulating the boundary and communicate it in a way that it can be heard?
 - Maintaining the boundaries if/when they are broken?