

Finding Balance: Living Well with Boundaries

What kind of boundaries do you have?

Porous:
almost always say yes

Inflexible:
almost always say no

Purposefully permeable:
say yes when it's warranted

Purposefully permeable boundaries can help build healthy relationships and maximize time, attention, and productivity.

Setting boundaries can be uncomfortable when you focus on the costs of saying no, like fear of: (select those that apply to you)

Disappointing someone

Being viewed as selfish

Someone failing without your help

Consequences

Other

The antidote?

- Remember the cost of saying “yes”
- Make decisions based on long-term best interests
- Learn to set effective boundaries

Remember: Not drawing a boundary comes with downsides, too. Identify those below that can help you remember why you want to set boundaries:

Less time and energy for existing tasks

Less time and energy for future opportunities that might be more important or of higher value to you

Increased risk of burnout if you are overextended already

Increased risk of resentment and relationship conflict

Other

Reflect on these questions to determine where boundaries could be helpful

Where do you feel over-extended or regularly stressed? _____

Where do you feel resentful or guilty? _____

Where are areas of concern related to work? _____

What boundaries do you need? _____

Use DEAR MAN to communicate your boundaries effectively

Describe the facts of the situation

e.g., You've asked me to help with this type of thing a few times. It's actually outside my job scope. Those tasks are the responsibility of another team.

Express how the lack of a boundary is impacting you

e.g., While I have helped in the past, I'm realizing that it is costing my team and delaying other projects.

Ask for what you want, or state the expectation

e.g., Moving forward, can we agree that this type of request will go to the responsible team?

Reinforce by sharing the positive outcome that will result

e.g., This will help me and my team meet deadlines, including for our shared projects.

Mindful—Stay mindful of your objective and bring the conversation back when it veers

Internal dialogue: My goal is to set the boundary, refocus and get us back on track.

Appear confident

Internal dialogue: It is OK to ask for things that are important to me.

Negotiate—If there is another way to achieve the goal, consider alternative solutions

e.g., Do you have any other ideas for solutions that could make this work better for everyone involved?

If the idea of drawing boundaries still feels challenging...practice!

- Practice by saying no in low-risk situations
e.g., Say no when a waitress asks if you want another drink.
- If appropriate, start with a behavior (e.g., not checking work email after hours) and then follow up with an explanation if asked
e.g., "I don't check my notifications after hours. I find that, when I do, I am often unable to give the issue the time and attention it deserves."
- Think of a response you can use next time someone asks you to do something in a situation where you would like to draw a boundary
e.g., "I appreciate that you trust me with this work. I want to maintain that trust by trying my best with all my assignments. I don't think I can do that with my current workload."
- Proactively reach out and practice DEAR MAN in a low-risk situation or with someone you are more comfortable practicing with.

Boundaries with yourself are important, too.

Set boundaries with yourself, by:

- Building in moments to recharge throughout your day. Check those you think could help:

Move your body:
stretch, walk, do
pushups

Sit down

Tense and release
muscles

Perform soothing
breathing exercises

Other

- Taking intentional breaks
- Creating an end-of-day ritual. Check those you might try:

Reflect on the
wins of the day

Visualize putting
work to rest

Use an activity to
signal the end of
the day (e.g., walk)

Make a short to-do
list for tomorrow

Other

When considering incoming requests – hit pause and ask yourself:

Do I have a choice? Yes No

Does it align with my values? Yes No

Do I want to do it? Yes No

Does it make sense to do it? Yes No

What is in *my* best interest long term? _____

What is in *their* best interest long term? _____

Taking all the information together to inform my choice, I decide to:

Set a boundary Say yes