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# SETTING BOUNDARIES: THE POWER OF “NO”

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# BOUNDARIES

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**The clear limits that  
separate you from others**



**Necessary for authentic  
relationships**



# WHAT GETS IN THE WAY: ENMESHMENT

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**Often begins in  
childhood**

Family "group think"  
Childhood conditioning  
Parent figures overly invested in children's lives- view children as a means of getting their own needs met.

**Complete lack of  
separateness**

Emotional Lines Blur  
Lack of ability to be authentic self

**No true  
connections**



# WHAT GETS IN THE WAY: "NICENESS"

- The expectation to be "nice."
  - "If I please others...then others will love me" attitude.
  - The compulsion to be liked, loved, adored, needed and valued traps us
  - Messages sent by culture, caregivers, society
- Getting on track with healthy boundaries is not about being rude, hurtful, arrogant or inconsiderate
  - It is about knowing your limits and communicating them in an effort to honor what is real, safe, and authentic to you.



# WHAT GETS IN THE WAY: RIGID SELF PROTECTION

- **Defense Mechanism**
  - Stems from having our own natural boundaries repeatedly violated by parent figure in childhood
  - Relationships feel unsafe and as a result, we wall ourselves off to stay separate from others
  - In reality- this makes authentic relationships nearly impossible on the other end of the spectrum



# BOUNDARIES

## Loose

- People pleasing, lacks ability to say no, overshares, chronic “fixer/rescuer/helper”
- Self-worth defined by the opinion of others

## Rigid

- Chronic fear of rejection, extremely private, difficulty asking for help, very few close or intimate relationships if any

## Flexible

- Comfortable communicating needs, knows appropriate bounds in sharing personal information, regulates emotions, aware of personal beliefs, opinions and thoughts and able to honor these while holding space for those of others, able and willing to say “no.”





# BOUNDARIES

## Physical

- **Execution:** Outlining personal space, comfort with physical touch/closeness, limiting what you are comfortable discussing regarding your body, diet, or sexuality, execution of self-care needs (preferred hours of sleep, etc).
- **Barriers:** Lack of physical autonomy in childhood, belief that worth is tied to appearance/body

## Resource

- **Execution:** Outlining and sticking to limits on your time, not over-extending yourself financially or creatively, saying no when you want to.
- **Barriers:** "On call" attitude, Inability to say "no" when asked to devote time, energy or resources to others, Give endlessly, resulting in unequal or draining exchanges with family/friends

## Mental/Emotional

- **Execution:** Agreeing to disagree, taking mental inventory and forming own opinions, saying "no" to emotional dumping
- **Barriers:** Enmeshment, the belief that we are responsible for the emotional state of others, "good girl" mindset, belief that it is our job to meet the needs of others, inability to consider other's viewpoints, keeping guard up.



# SETTING BOUNDARIES

## Boundaries are NOT:

- Ultimatums
- Power and Control over others

## Boundaries ARE:

- For YOU
- Personal limit set and maintained for your benefit, regardless of how others respond or react





# SETTING BOUNDARIES

## Define

- Consider people/events in your life
- Listen to body's cues (tightness in chest, clenching jaw)
- Reclaim personal energy- "what will make ME feel safe, comfortable and happy?"

## Communicate

- Setting intention- important for self
- "Why" not necessary/required
- Focus on facts (this is what I will allow)
- Avoid "you" language
- Timing

## Maintain

- Remain present and calm in face of opposition to boundary
- Resist urge to defend, over explain or justify
- The reaction (defensiveness, anger, attack) you receive is not about you.



# DEFINING BOUNDARIES

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**This is what IS  
okay**

- Tolerable
- Safe
- Allowable

**This is what is  
NOT okay**

- NOT Tolerable
- NOT Safe
- NOT Allowable



# DO I NEED BOUNDARY WORK?

- Do you:
  - Agree with others to keep the peace?
  - Say yes when you want to say no?
  - Feel burned out?
  - Feel guilty for doing something for yourself?
  - Struggle with making decisions?
  - Over-extend yourself with regards to your time, money, or energy?
  - Feel taken advantage of?
  - Feel responsible for the happiness of others?
  - Avoid speaking up when your feelings are hurt?
  - Hate letting people down?
  - Feel over-committed and under-appreciated?
  - Take on more than you feel capable of to avoid “letting others down?”
  - Feel resentful in significant relationships?



# BOUNDARIES AND THE POWER OF NO



# WHY DO WE SAY YES WHEN WE WANT TO SAY NO?

- **Insta-Culture**
  - “FOMO”
  - Glorification of busy
    - Rest is something that must be “earned”



# WHY DO WE SAY YES WHEN WE WANT TO SAY NO?

- **Gender Roles**
  - Expectation on women to show up, do, manage, plan, produce, etc.
  - This is particularly true around the holidays.
    - Saying no often leads to self or others questioning role as woman/partner/mother/employee





# WHY DO WE SAY YES WHEN WE WANT TO SAY NO?

- **Obligation**
- **Guilt**
- **Desire to be liked, loved, needed**
- **People Pleasing**
  - **Abandoning ourselves to make sure others are okay**
  - **Unconscious attempt to control someone's opinion of you**
  - **Passive form of self-betrayal and self-harm**





# WHY DO WE SAY YES WHEN WE WANT TO SAY NO?

- The belief that setting boundaries will look “mean”
  - Conditioned beliefs:
    - Saying no to others is rude and inconsiderate.
    - Saying yes is kind and loving.
- *“If people around me don’t like what I am doing, I must be doing something wrong.”*
  - Conditioned belief:
    - I must please others to earn their love/respect/acceptance



# IMPLICATIONS OF YES CULTURE

- **Burnout**
- **Resentment**
- **Health Consequences**
- **Social Emotional Consequences**
  - **Saying yes to what you don't like/want means saying no to what you do**



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**“CHOOSE DISCOMFORT  
OVER RESENTMENT.”  
—BRENE BROWN**



# DISCOMFORT OVER RESENTMENT

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Trying to avoid discomfort will lead us to allow others do things that are NOT okay, and we end up resentful, hateful, angry and bitter.

What limits need to be in place to maintain my autonomy and integrity?



# DISCOMFORT OVER RESENTMENT

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**Practice the pause  
and ask yourself:**

Do I really want to do this/attend this/accept this/allow this?  
Does this feel safe for me?  
How do I feel about this idea/event/contribution/situation?  
What is my preference? What feels authentic to me?  
Do I have time/energy/desire to say yes?

**The holidays are  
never a justification  
for jeopardizing your  
mental or emotional  
health**

Attend events and spend time with certain people only if you feel safe doing so.  
Attend events and spend time with certain people only if you want to.  
Attend events and spend time with certain people only if it works for your family's schedule.  
Attend events and spend time with certain people only if you feel welcomed, respected, seen and heard by others present.



# SAYING NO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

No to unwanted plans

No to relationships that bring you down or no longer serve you

No to yourself

No to over-scheduling

No to over-committing

No to curating the perfect childhood for our children

No to social media



# SAYING NO

- Be direct
- Be sincere
- Choose a medium that is comfortable and appropriate
- Provide an alternative (if you want)
- Keep it simple





# SAYING NO

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**Practice... yes, really!**



**Ditch the justifications**



# DISCOMFORT OVER RESENTMENT

"Thank you for the invite, we won't be able to attend this year."

"I understand that it's important to you to have everyone attend this dinner, but it's not going to work for my family."

"Please do not talk about my body. My outfit/weight/appearance/dietary choices are not up for discussion."

"Please respect her decision to not give hugs. It's her body, so it's her choice what she is comfortable with."

"I would like to talk to you about something you said yesterday. It made me feel..."

"We are excited for dinner tonight; please remember that we are not comfortable discussing (finances/religion/politics/vaccines/weight/parenting/etc). If the conversation takes this route we will excuse ourselves."

"I'm happy that worked for you, this is what works for our family."

"I appreciate your input, I'll take that into consideration."



# DISCOMFORT OVER RESENTMENT

"My plate is full right now; I can't take that on."

"I need to step away from this; it's distracting me from (work/family/my health/etc) and I need a break."

"No."

"Now is not a good time."

"This is how we have decided to parent; you do not have to agree, but please respect our right to choose what is best for our children."

"I respect your right to your opinion, but we need to agree to disagree."

"I'm trying to avoid gossip, this type of conversation doesn't make me feel good. Tell me about your vacation!"

"This isn't working out."



# SAYING NO

Gives "yes"  
more  
meaning

Frees up  
your time

Minimizes  
anger and  
resentment

Is  
empowering



# OBSTACLES

- **Setting healthy boundaries will often bring out the emotional immaturity of those you are setting them with.**
  - **Those most impacted by our boundaries will be the most upset.**

# OBSTACLES

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## Criticism:

"Oh, that's ridiculous!"

"That's not how we do things."

"You are so selfish."

"Why are you being so difficult?"



## Guilt:

"I thought you loved me."

"I'm a terrible parent then, aren't I?"

"After everything I've done for you?"



## Ridicule:

"Oh, you're so much better than us now, aren't you?"

"I liked you better before you got healthy."

"There you go with your boundaries again."



# MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

- Stay present, stay focused
- Breathe and pause
- Listen
- Reflect
  - Why are they responding this way?
  - Is this about me or about them?
  - Does their unhappiness require me to change my mind?





# MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

- **Requires managing expectations**
  - Self
  - Others
- **Boundary work involves navigating what we expect from others and acknowledging what certain people are or are not capable of.**
- **Accept that many people will not change**
  - Know when to choose your battles



# **BOUNDARIES CREATE CHOICE**

- When boundaries are in place, we are given the opportunity to **CHOOSE** when, how and with whom we share and direct our emotional energy.
- Others may be upset when their expectations for you or the relationship are not met – and that's okay.
  - They have a choice too.

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- **How To Do The Work: Recognize Your Patterns, Heal From Your Past & Create Yourself**, by Dr. Nicole LePera
- **Not Nice: Stop People Pleasing, Staying Silent & Feeling Guilty...and Start Speaking Up, Saying No, Asking Boldly, and Unapologetically Being Yourself**, by Dr. Aziz Gazipura
- **Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No**, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

