

Healthy Boundaries Can Reduce Your Stress Part Two 2.0 CE Hours

Healthy Boundaries Can Reduce Your Stress Part Two: How to Create These Boundaries

2.0 Contact Hours

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Course Objectives:

1. Identify ways to create your personal boundaries.
2. Explore self-awareness.
3. Learn about setting your boundaries with others.
4. List ways to strengthen your internal boundaries
5. Understand how to overcome guilt.
6. Indicate how to overcome resistance.
7. Identify ways to find support.
8. Learn tips to help make setting boundaries easier.

There Are Many Ways to Create Your Personal Boundaries

This follow up course will provide some practical tools to get you started thinking about setting and maintaining the boundaries.

There are a number of ways to create and honor boundaries that are important to you. Life coach Cheryl Richardson says that creating stronger boundaries is the **number one way for most people to improve their lives**. She invites you to set personal boundaries and free yourself from the “*disease to please*” with these three steps:

Step 1: Self-Awareness The first step in learning to set boundaries is self-awareness.

For example, pay close attention to the situations when you lose energy, feel a knot in your stomach, or want to cry. Identifying where you need more space, energy, self-respect or personal power is the first step. Start by identifying your boundaries by completing these three sentences with at least 10 examples each:

1. People may not
_____.

2. I have a right to ask for
_____.

3. To protect my time and energy, it is OK to
_____.

Step 2: Setting Your Boundaries Learn to set boundaries with others.

Start setting simple but firm boundaries with a graceful or neutral tone. This will feel uncomfortable at first, but as you take care of yourself, the personal power you gain will make it easier.

1. Be sure to have support in place before and after each conversation. If you cannot find support from a friend

or family member, you might find a friend online.

2. Vent any strong emotions with the person *before* having your boundary conversation.

3. Use simple, direct language. Here are some examples:

○ *To set a boundary with an angry person:*

■ "You may not yell at me. If you continue, I will leave the room."

○ *To set a boundary with personal phone calls at work:*

■ "I've decided to take all personal calls in the evening in order to get my work done. I will need to call you later."

○ *To say no to extra commitments:*

■ "Although this organization is important to me, I need to decline your request for volunteer help in order to honor my family's needs."

○ *To set a boundary with someone who is critical:*

■ "It's not okay with me that you comment on my weight. I want you to stop."

○ *To buy yourself time when making tough decisions:*

■ "I'll have to sleep on it, I have a policy of not making decisions right away."

○ *To back out of a commitment:*

■ "I know I agreed to head up our fundraising efforts, but after reviewing my schedule, I now realize that I won't be able to give it my best attention. I'm able to help find a replacement, though."

○ *To set a boundary with an adult who continually asks to borrow money:*

■ “I won’t be lending you money anymore. I love you and I want you to take responsibility for yourself.”

When setting boundaries, there is no need to defend, debate, or over-explain your feelings. Be firm, gracious and direct. When faced with resistance, repeat your statement or request. Back up your boundary with action. Stay strong. If you give in, you invite people to ignore your needs.

Step 3: Strengthen Your Internal Boundaries

One of the reasons that some people take things personally is because they have weak “internal boundaries.” An internal boundary is like an invisible shield that prevents you from taking in a comment without checking it out first. For example, when someone accuses you of being arrogant, stop and consider if the statement is true *before* taking it in.

When you use this internal shield, especially with difficult people like an ex-spouse or a critical boss, it gives you time to ask yourself the following three questions:

- How much of this is true about me?
- How much of this is about the other person?
- What do I need to do (if anything) to regain my personal power or stand up for myself?

This last question is very important. Too often people neglect to stand up for themselves by avoiding confrontation and end up weakening their internal shield, making it harder to set boundaries at all. So, if someone offends you, it may be necessary to let them know in order to protect and strengthen your internal boundaries.

Here are a few more examples:

- Be clear about the boundary to both yourself and others
 - Make sure you have been thoughtful about the boundary issue and have defined for yourself and others what is

acceptable and unacceptable.

- Once a boundary is crossed, remind the individual of your boundary and ask for his/her respect in maintaining that boundary.
- If the individual continues to violate the boundary, ask firmly and politely for the behavior to stop. If the behavior continues, consider what further action is appropriate to stop the behavior. Remember that while you may be firm, you should also remain respectful of the other individual.
- Identify ways to position yourself in a time and place that minimizes the opportunity for your boundaries to be crossed.
- Thank those people around you who honor your boundaries and thank those who have honored your requests to start observing your boundaries.
- Always seek to understand and honor the boundaries of others.

Overcoming Guilt

Guilt is the most common obstacle to taking care of your self. If you have had a pattern of placing others before yourself, you *will* feel guilty when you begin making yourself a priority. Guilt often arises when we refuse to forgive ourselves for things that we are not proud of in the past. But the guilt you will experience as you begin to take care of yourself is a pre-emptive kind of guilt. It comes from the fact that you believe you are not worthy of putting yourself first, and/or that you should have other, more important priorities. To overcome this guilt, face it head on. See it as a sign that you are on the right track.

Gary Zukav, prolific author and founder of the Seat of the Soul Institute, points out that while guilt is a familiar feeling, as opposed to the conventional wisdom of many, it is not a *natural* feeling. It has no constructive, productive purpose, and it is not healthy. Consider the following when

experiencing guilt:

- Guilt inhibits your ability to be honest with yourself and with others.
- The pain triggered by guilt stops you from realizing that you are not able to be the cause of another's emotional pain. The emotional pain from others comes from inside of them, not from you.
- Pain is an opportunity for you to learn lessons about yourself but guilt distracts you from those important lessons.
- You have certain gifts to offer that your soul provides that are not possible to pass on when you are feeling guilty. If you do not allow yourself the opportunity to forgive yourself for the past, or allow yourself the space to prioritize your own self-care, you are making the choice to not offer the worlds the gifts your soul has to offer.
- We are meant to learn from our past experiences and feeling guilt stops you from experiencing that learning.

Overcoming Resistance

If you feel your own resistance to taking care of yourself first, remember, when you do this you are then more fully available to others without resentment or anger. You can then tell people your priorities have changed and that you are taking care of your needs without guilt or anger. Steven Pressfield, author of *Do the Work! Overcome Resistance and Get Out of Your Own Way*, points to overthinking and hesitation as major reasons we tend to give into resistance when we take on a new project or phase of our lives. He says, "Don't think. Act." Furthermore he recommends the following to accomplish our goals and overcome resistance:

- **"Be stubborn"**– Commit to action

- **Maintain a “blind faith”**– There is a spiritual aspect to creativity and our most vital friend is belief
- **Stick with your “passion”**– Fear suppresses our passion but when we conquer our fears we will find a “boundless, bottomless, inexhaustible well of passion”

Find Support

When you start making yourself a priority, you may feel uncomfortable and uncaring. Often when we start on a path of improving ourselves, we find ourselves coming up against an endless line of naysayers who are simply unhappy with their own lives and do not want to see others improve on their situations. Unfortunately, these people can even be those closest to us. When you find yourself confronted by this type of negativity, hold steadfast to your self-care plan. Be ready with positive affirmations to recite to yourself and if need be, to those to try and trip you up and stop your progress.

Instead of being discouraged, stay with it and find support from others who are doing the same types of things with their life that you are. Perhaps there are others at work that either already are or would be open to improving their levels of self-care. If you have a family with a significant other and/or children, they might want to join you on this journey. But if none of those are options, look online to groups that are inclined towards supporting self-care improvement and join up with them. You can do this virtually or at in-person meetings or activities.

More Tips to Help Make Setting Boundaries Easier

Since no single approach will address every boundary issue, here are a few more tips to help you.

- **Prepare to have your buttons pushed when you are around difficult people.** If you consider what you know about a difficult person, you will likely find some recurring themes. For example, maybe your dad always compares you

to your siblings, or blames you for your two failed marriages. Identify these common trigger points ahead of time and simply ignore him when he touches on them. Instead of reacting angrily or getting hurt, gently change the subject – as many times as you need to.

- **Know how much you are willing to tolerate.** If you are clear about how much you are willing and able to do and you stick to that, you will be less susceptible to guilt trips and manipulative behavior. Set clear limits for how much emotional abuse you will put up with. If the person will not stop criticizing, leave the room, make yourself a cup of tea and have a self-compassion break.
- **Try something different.** If your interactions are uniformly negative, think about how to change the dynamic. Are there less stressful ways you can spend time together? If talking usually ends in an argument, offer to read to the person, play a game, play music, clean the room, weed the garden, or cook a special meal. Take him or her out for a stroll in the wheelchair to get a change of scenery. Or ask the person about his past. Any tangible project you can do together can help you be close without treading on personally triggering ground.

A Final Note

If you have problems setting boundaries with people in your life, you are encouraged you to take action and begin work on that as soon as possible. Take advantage of the time you have now, before you become even more stressed or burned-out!

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