



## **Boundaries Assessment**

Many people have never given healthy boundaries any thought. Assess yourself and increase your awareness. Raising your awareness will help you develop an action plan to define your boundaries and help you stay emotionally healthy.

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

- *Do you feel stressed, overwhelmed, burnt out?*
- *Do you see yourself as the only one who can help, and that you therefore should say yes?*
- *Do others' needs seem more important than yours?*
- *Do you resent others for their demands and expectations?*
- *Do you often say yes only because you feel responsible for other people's feelings?*
- *Do you feel distressed if someone seems as if they don't like you or disapproves of you?*
- *Do you say "OK" or nothing at all when you would rather not do something because you do not want a confrontation or to hurt someone's feelings?*

### **Know yourself**

Recognizing your own needs and wants is essential in establishing healthy boundaries. Once you know what you want and need you will feel more able to handle conflict in a way that works for you. When setting boundaries you are considering the totality of your values, the limits of your time and energy, and your desire and ability to sacrifice. Having a clear picture of your values and priorities will help keep you from making commitments in a vulnerable moment.

1. What matters most to me? (Examples include: family, health, friends, wealth/finances, business/career, fun, travel, spirituality/religion, personal enrichment)
  - a. How is that reflected in what I spend my time on?
2. How do I prioritize the things that matter most to me (to include goals, dreams, morals, values, and what matters to you as listed above)?
  - a. What is non-negotiable for me?



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**Know yourself continued:**

- b. What can I be somewhat flexible about?
  
- c. What can I always be flexible about?

**Strategize**

Evaluate past, current, and future situations to help you identify the boundary situations that are the most difficult for you. Come up with a formula for evaluating and addressing your needs and the demands of the situation. Remember, your needs are a valid priority. Having a plan to establish boundaries ahead of time will make it easier to implement; you will be thinking with a clearer head, not bound by the feelings of the moment.

**Example:**

Boundary problem: I continually *have to* respond to client emails and calls on the weekends interfering in my time to spend with friends and family.

Goal: Having time away from my clients to spend as I want and need in order to care for myself.

Determine: How many days a week do I want to be available to clients?  
How many evenings do I want to work?  
Which days (or parts of the day) do I want to purposely schedule off for personal/family/self-care time?

Action Plan: I will inform clients that I am only available to respond to calls from 9am-6pm Monday through Friday and that I will respond to emails within 24 business hours. I will **only** respond to clients when they contact me during my set hours, even if it makes me uncomfortable. If there is an emergency with my clients I will deal with it on a case by case basis.

**Creating Your Personal Boundaries:**

1. List at least three boundaries that need strengthening from any area of your life.
  
2. Determine your goal in strengthening the boundaries.
  
3. Identify potential solutions to the boundary issues.
  
4. Develop an action plan for implementing the solution(s).



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## Book Recommendations

***The Gifts of Imperfection:*** by Brené Brown

Brené Brown is a researcher on shame, authenticity, and belonging, and *The Gifts of Imperfection* is a great book about all of these things. If you, like many lawyers, struggle with perfectionism, it's a must read. If you haven't seen the [TED Talk](#), *The Power of Vulnerability*, go watch it right now.

***Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*** by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

Having clear boundaries is essential to a healthy, balanced lifestyle. If you sometimes feel "boundary-challenged" this book is a great resource. While it has a Christian slant it can be helpful regardless of religious affiliation.

***The Dance of Connection: How to Talk to Someone When You're Mad, Hurt, Scared, Frustrated, Insulted, Betrayed, or Desperate*** by Harriet Lerner

While we cannot control how others respond to us, we can control how we express ourselves which maximizes our chances of being heard. Lerner helps us learn how to expand their communication skills to address problem situations, to create dialogue, and to resolve conflicts.

***Emotional Blackmail: When the People in Your Life Use Fear, Obligation, and Guilt to Manipulate You*** by Susan Forward.

If you are feeling controlled by someone else's needs this is the book for you. Dr. Forward gives the reader powerful, practical strategies to identify and correct relationships damaged by manipulation.

***Honor Your Anger: How Transforming Your Anger Style Can Change Your Life*** by Beverly Engel.

A person's way of expressing anger can range from acting out to suppressing it and turning it against oneself. When channeled in a negative direction anger can harm your relationships, your career, and yourself. Engel shows you how to express your anger in healthy ways and use it as a force for change.

***Manage Your Time to Reduce Your Stress: A Handbook for the Overworked, Overscheduled, and Overwhelmed*** by Rita Emmett

According to the author, the key is not time management but "stuff management — taking control of all those tasks to do, people to see, commitments and obligations to fulfill. Mismanagement of all that "to-do" stuff is what leads to stress. Emmett combines quick, easy-to-digest tips and infectious good humor to give readers positive ways to handle stress and their overly busy lives.

***Setting Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself*** by Nedra Glover Tawwab

The author offers simple-yet-powerful ways to establish healthy boundaries in all aspects of life. Rooted in the latest research and best practices used in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), these techniques help us identify and express our needs clearly and without apology--and unravel a root problem behind codependency, power struggles, anxiety, depression, burnout, and more.

***Things Might Go Terribly, Horribly Wrong: A Guide to Life Liberated from Anxiety***

- Kelly G. Wilson PhD and Troy DuFrene

The book starts a conversation about why we all sometimes feel anxious and what role that anxiety serves in our lives. It connects the experience of anxiety to the essential experience of human suffering. And then, in sometimes unexpected ways, it explores some basic ways of being in the world that can change the role anxiety plays in your life.