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practice overall, and learning to use tarot, oracle cards, rune stones, I Ching, or other forms of divination can be useful.)

## **Good Boundaries Exude Strength**

When you know what your boundaries are, people become instinctively aware of that fact because you will exude an unspoken strength. This strength acts as a deterrent to others who tend to practice control and manipulation. Your energy is not attractive to them. This strength also lets people know you are respectful of their boundaries as well.

Good boundaries help you to say no or yes in various circumstances that require you to regulate all manner of people, situations, and demands that enter your life. Unregulated demands and stresses can become overwhelming. We see evidence of this in people who are overextended, leading to staff burnout in social service and health care arenas. This energy exhaustion and burnout can occur from the front line, to middle management, and up to the director's level.

The ability to consciously regulate the stimuli in your personal as well as your daily work life will also allow you to feel more confident and express yourself in a more authentic way. Your realness will pull in more of the respect you deserve. You will also attract better personal and work-life circumstances because respecting yourself draws respect from others. We are constantly teaching people how to treat us.

If you've not practiced being definitive before, defining and standing up for your boundaries in personal relationships will bring challenges from family, friends,

or even ex-partners. It can surprise people who may have enjoyed receiving your attention in a manner that no longer serves you. In short, they probably won't be too happy about your stand for clarity and limit setting, and you may ultimately receive comments to suggest your attitude needs a serious adjustment. Just stand firm in your decision to support your true worth and uphold what you most treasure: yourself.

## **Know Yourself**

The better we know ourselves in as many areas as possible, the easier it is to set our boundaries and limits. That doesn't mean that knowing ourselves will suddenly create the balance we need for home and work challenges and our own necessary self-care, but it will definitely help.

Over the course of a hectic or chaotic day, you sometimes lose clarity about yourself, and in those moments, you need to take time to go inward, take a few breaths, and reflect on how you really feel to re-establish some clarity around your time and space. In those moments, just remember to sit quietly and breathe in and out. This will immediately begin to quiet your mind for clearer inner listening. You can use any of the grounding, clearing, and protection measures you've read about.

The clarity that comes from practice in focusing on your feelings, wishes, and nourishment needs is important to setting good boundaries. It is also good to have a sense of your own pace regarding how fast or slow you like to do things. If someone makes a request of your time, and you're not sure about that request, establish for yourself how much

time you have left in a day (automatically include a few moments for yourself), and then pace more slowly in terms of what kind of time is actually realistic for you to give, and in what manner and context.

## **Setting Boundaries**

Setting boundaries means clarifying and making mindful, informed decisions about how to prioritize your time around work, family members, friends, and other activities, as well as making it a priority to spend as much nourishing self-care time as possible with yourself. Remember to do the following:

- Clearly know and speak your limits to those around you
- Support your boundaries or limit setting with healthy decisions that nourish your well-being
- Try to maintain consistency in your responses
- Remember that your self-respecting actions teach others how to treat you

## **Saying No and Feeling Guilty**

If you set a boundary and feel guilty, that's not a bad sign. It generally means you are resetting the expectations of yourself and others that may have kept you in place and even entrapped you. It's an emotional adjustment process, and it takes time and patience.

Setting personal boundaries and sticking to them while others complain that their needs are not being met can initially feel selfish or self-centered, but it's really about honoring and respecting yourself. People don't often like change, especially when they experience you as taking yourself away from meeting their needs or abandoning them. However, they'll have to get used to the new you and adjust themselves accordingly. This is where codependent or simply unhealthy, unbalanced relationships show up.

You may realize you have been an over-functioning participant, as many of us are, for periods of time. Moving away from this caregiving or rescuing role will bring you more vitality and focus to accomplish more of what matters to you.

Your life's mission and passions will also reveal themselves more clearly to you after you successfully make emotional and psychological room for them to be heard from within. Some boundaries are nonnegotiable, resulting in a strict do-not-cross boundary setting. Overall, it's important to know what boundaries are so important for you to safeguard that they are not to be tampered with at any cost.

### **Assertiveness Exercise**

This exercise is meant to help you start the process of thinking assertively to draw in more strength from any measure of past success. Thinking about self-assertion is the first step to getting your frame of mind to back you up, followed by seeking out more help, if necessary, toward taking action to accomplish your goal.

Think of a time in your life that you felt the strongest in terms of following a path you knew was clearly right for you. You can be any age, even as a child. Think of your deep commitment to following your plan through. How did you accomplish your goal? Who was there to support you? What was in place to assist you?

- Think of any measure of happiness, sense of pride, or degree of accomplishment that you experienced along the way. See if you can also recall somewhere inside yourself when you felt decisive in saying, “*I will move forward*” to whoever or whatever stood in the way of your success. Feel again your commitment to stand your ground and move yourself forward.
- Think of a present situation that is bothering you or a habit you want to be free of that is not supporting your health. Draw up your past memory and allow the strength that you had inside of you then to come forward into this present situation. Really get into the mind-set of yourself in that past time, and recall your commitment to succeed.
- Stay in that mind-set and write down any words that come to you about how you felt. Know that as soon as you put your mind in that same frame from your past, you are already on the right track to accomplishing this goal.
- Picture yourself standing strong in your commitment to assert yourself. See yourself stepping away from the current situation or negative behavior.

## **Assertive Bill of Rights**

Develop your own list of assertiveness rights. See the list below, replicated from Gael Lindenfield,<sup>11</sup> a leading personal development trainer in the United Kingdom, and look at it as a psychological and emotional boost. This list can be a helpful reminder to carry with you or keep where it's easy to see.

- The right to ask for what we want, realizing that the other person has the right to say no.
- The right to have opinions, feelings, and emotions and to express them appropriately.
- The right to make statements that have no logical basis and that we don't have to justify.
- The right to make our own decisions and to cope with their consequences.
- The right to choose whether to get involved with the problems of someone else or not.
- The right to know about something or understand it.
- The right to make mistakes.
- The right to be successful.
- The right to change our mind.
- The right to privacy.
- The right to be alone and independent.
- The right to change ourselves and be more assertive.

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<sup>11</sup> Gael Lindenfield (<http://www.gaellindenfield.com>)