

How to Set Boundaries & Say No Without Guilt

Your simple guide to protecting your energy

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Introduction

Do you ever feel guilty saying no?

Do you struggle with over-explaining or worrying about disappointing others?

You're not alone—many of us have been conditioned to people-please.

The truth? **Setting boundaries isn't mean—it's necessary.** When you respect your own limits, others will too.

This guide will help you recognize where you need boundaries, how to communicate them, and most importantly, **how to say no without guilt.**

Let's go!

1. What Are Boundaries & Why Do They Matter?

Boundaries are limits you set to protect your time, energy, and well-being.

They help you:

- ✓ Prevent burnout
- ✓ Build healthier relationships
- ✓ Feel more confident in your decisions
- ✓ Stop overcommitting and resenting it later

Types of Boundaries:

Time boundaries – "I don't answer work emails after 6 PM."

Emotional boundaries – "I can support you, but I'm not available to fix everything for you."

Physical boundaries – "I need personal space when I'm upset."

Mental boundaries – "I respect your opinion, but I have my own perspective on this."

Work boundaries – "I can't take on another project right now."

Ask yourself:

- Where do I feel drained or taken advantage of?
- Who do I say "yes" to when I really want to say "no"?
- What situations make me feel guilty for prioritizing myself?

If you answered yes to any of these, it's a sign you need stronger boundaries.

2. How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty

The biggest reason people struggle with boundaries? Fear of disappointing others. But saying no doesn't make you selfish—it means you're valuing yourself.

How to Say No in Different Situations

At Work:

When someone keeps giving you extra tasks:

"I don't have the capacity to take this on right now, but I can help you find another solution."

OR

"I don't have the capacity to take this on right now, should this take priority over something else?"

When a colleague keeps interrupting you:

"I want to give this my full attention. Can we schedule a time to discuss it later?"

When your boss expects you to work late consistently:

"I'm happy to give my best during work hours, but I have commitments after. Let's find a way to prioritize this during the day."

OR

"I can't stay late tonight, but I can take a look at it first thing tomorrow."

With Friends:

When a friend only reaches out when they need something:

"I value our friendship, but I'd love for us to connect beyond just when you need support."

With Friends (continued):

When someone pressures you to go out when you don't want to:

"I appreciate the invite, but I'm staying in tonight. Let's plan something another time."

When a friend makes passive-aggressive comments:

"I'm not okay with jokes at my expense. If something is bothering you, let's talk about it directly."

With Family:

When family members criticize your choices:

"I know you have good intentions, but I need you to respect my decisions, even if you don't agree."

When a relative asks too many personal questions:

"I prefer to keep that private, but I appreciate you asking."

In Relationships:

When someone doesn't respect your time:

"I value consistency. If plans keep getting canceled last minute, it won't work for me."

When a partner speaks to you in a way you don't like:

"I don't accept being spoken to like that. If we're going to communicate, it needs to be respectful."

When you need space but they push back:

"I care about you, but I need some alone time to recharge. It's not about you—it's just how I function best." **OR** "I need some space to process my feelings before we talk."

3. How to Handle Guilt & Stand Firm

It's natural to feel guilty when you start enforcing boundaries—especially if you're used to people-pleasing. But remember:

- ✓ You're not being mean; you're being clear. Boundaries protect your time, energy, and well-being.
- ✓ Their reaction isn't your responsibility. If someone is upset, that's a reflection of their expectations, not your worth.
- ✓ Guilt fades, but resentment builds. Saying "yes" just to avoid guilt will only lead to frustration and burnout.

How to respond when guilt creeps in:

"I get that this is different for you, but I need to prioritize my well-being."

"I know this boundary feels new, but it's important to me."

The "Broken Record" Method:

Some people won't take "no" for an answer. That's where the Broken Record Method comes in: keep repeating your boundary without getting pulled into arguments, explanations, or guilt trips.

- If someone keeps pushing, don't engage—repeat your boundary.

Example 1:

A friend who always asks for last-minute favors.

Them: "Please, just this one time!"

You: "I can't help this time."

Them: "But I really need you!"

You: "I understand, but I can't help this time."

Example 2:

A boss who expects you to stay late.

Them: "We really need you to stay late again."

You: "I have other commitments after work, so I can't."

Them: "Can't you just make an exception?"

You: "I'm sorry but I can't stay late, I'm happy to work on it in the morning."

Pro Tip

The key is not getting sucked into long explanations. The more you explain, the more opportunities they have to poke holes in your boundary.

4. 6-Step Boundary-Setting Challenge

💡 *A simple step-by-step challenge to help you practice boundaries in real life! You can do one per day or many, up to you!*

Step 1: Identify Your Boundary Blind Spots

Notice the moments when you feel resentful, drained, or frustrated. These are signs a boundary is missing! Write them down.

Step 2: The “Pause Before Yes” Rule

Before saying yes to anything today, **pause**. Ask yourself: *Do I really want to do this?* If not, try saying, “Let me think about it.”

Step 3: Say No Without Over-Explaining

Practice saying no today in a way that feels natural. Keep it **short and simple**. (Ex: “I can’t make it, but thank you for inviting me!”)

Step 4: Set a New Boundary

Decide on one boundary you *wish* you had in place—then set it! It could be with work, family, or even social media.

Step 5: Handle Guilt & Pushback

Notice if you feel guilty or anxious when setting a boundary. Remind yourself: *I am not responsible for managing others’ emotions.*

Step 6: Celebrate Your Wins!

Look back—where did you succeed? How did it feel? Even small wins matter. Keep practicing!

Final Reminder:

Every time you hold a boundary, you reinforce your self-respect. The people who truly care about you will adjust—and those who don't? They benefited from you having none.

Love,
Coach Marie

You got this 💪

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