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# Setting Boundaries Will Help You, the World, and Your Relationships Flourish

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**K**ind and caring people often have the hardest time setting boundaries and saying no to others. It can feel easier to meet someone else's needs at the moment than to disappoint them. After all, it is a good thing to be giving, right? Sometimes this is the case, but not always. Over-giving usually creates an imbalance in the relationship that can lead to resentment. Resentment is one of the biggest problems for over-givers. If you do not get back what you put in to the relationship, the dynamic becomes unbalanced, which is unhealthy and creates more problems. Therefore, over-giving actually damages the relationship.

It can feel hard to say no. You do not want to hurt someone's feelings or disappoint them. There is a part of us that wants to help others and often end up giving and giving, sometimes beyond our capacity. When we have created that expectation in our relationships, friendships and possibly at work, we end up giving more than we have, and therefore, our own needs end up at the very bottom. Are there people you are around that really drain your energy? Many givers end up having a lot of people in their lives who have come to expect that level of giving all the time. Are you getting back what you are giving out? That tends to be a common experience for a lot of us. It is important to find that balance. There has

to be give and take in a relationship for it to be balanced and healthy.

If you find that when you are around certain people your body gives you messages that you are feeling icky inside or depleted, or maybe you dread being around that person, that is good information that you may want to reevaluate that relationship. When you recognize that you have been giving more than you receive in a relationship or they have not asked how you are doing or are not giving you the support you need, try asking for support. You can try simply saying "I have been happy to be able to support you, and I am wondering if you could give me some support now so I can talk about something that is on my mind and receive support from you." This is a way for you to know if they can and are willing to give you that support in return. Some people will not even realize the dynamic has been like that, and they will be happy to give you support now that it has been requested.

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There will also be some people who cannot give you support. They either do not have it to give or do not want to give it. Those are relationships you will want to evaluate to determine if they are healthy for you or not. Are they people that need to be in your life, or can they be people you set some boundaries with? It is also okay to shed relationships and friendships if they are not right for you. A shedding process is common for people who are working on setting healthy boundaries and becoming more empowered as they find out what does and does not work for them and how to balance their needs. The shedding process also opens up energy and space for other things that can be better for you or more important for the world than a draining or one-sided relationship. There are some people who have a hole in their bucket, and no matter how much you put in there it will never be enough. We have to pay attention to how much we are putting into that bucket.

Imagine life is a river and we are in a raft, constantly pulling people into our raft; we are all going to drown eventually because we cannot put an unlimited number of people into our raft before we sink. It is better to empower them to build and take care of their own rafts so you can keep your raft strong too. Listen to what your body is saying. It is okay to say no, and you do not even have to explain yourself. I often recommend that you do not explain. For example, if you are invited to an event that you do not want to go, you can simply say, "No, I am not going to be able to attend." You do not have to explain why if you do not want to. Sometimes we feel as if we have to explain ourselves, and that often comes from a place of defensiveness where we feel we have to defend our *no*. You do not have to explain your *no*; other people say no without explanation, and it is okay for you to say no too.

Tip: Practice not giving an answer right away. Instead, simply say, "Let me get back to you about that." It gives you time to think about what feels right to you, how much energy you have, the state of your well-being and what your needs might be. It gives you

time to think so you do not regret saying yes when you want to say no, for example. If you check-in and realize you are depleted or overbooked, then taking care of your well-being and balance becomes the priority. People who really care about you want you to be your balanced, healthy self. You are the only one that really knows what is right for you and what is not. If only we could have a battery pack on our forehead that shows our energy is depleted and tells us that we need to recharge! But since we do not have that and other people cannot know, we need to tell them and make our needs known. Often, the people in your life who have the hardest time with you setting boundaries are the ones who need boundaries the most.

I certainly had to develop the ability to say no without guilt and set healthy boundaries in my life too. I was so focused on taking care of everyone else's needs that I did not even know what my needs were when I started learning about the importance of healthy boundaries. Now, as a psychotherapist, I see that many of us have to learn what our needs are and how to take care of ourselves in restorative ways. Giving until we are depleted is not healthy and will not create healthy relationship dynamics.

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While boundary creation can be difficult to start with, meeting your needs for your wellness is important. One area that can help is changing the lens through which you view the *no*. It is easy to focus on how the *no* impacts that other person, especially if they are disappointed in your *no*. But I suggest using the lens



that helps you look internally into how the *yes* you say to yourself is healthy for you and right for you. If we focus too much on another person's potential disappointment with our decisions, then that focus becomes bigger than our own need in the moment and makes it easy to skip over the best decision for our own well-being. But as we see, skipping our needs leads to resentment, and that creates a disconnect in the relationship. I suggest using a viewpoint that, instead, helps you redirect the focus onto how saying no is a way of honoring your needs and well-being. Shift that viewpoint a bit, and even if you notice guilt pop up, put the guilt on the table and talk to it. Why is the guilt there and what is it trying to say to you? Start talking to the guilt and even writing it out so you can engage the cognitive brain to help you understand what you are feeling emotionally. The cognitive brain is the part of your brain that can be rational and see facts. For example, if I attend that

event, I will be so depleted I might get sick or be irritable or add to my resentment tank, so I should rest instead. That thought process comes from the cognitive part, so it can support you to be able to take care of your needs.

When you start honoring your needs, you start feeling better. When you are living in your balanced, centered wellness, you are impacting others in a positive way, whether it is in your family, friendships, relationships, your work environment — all of it. This is the new viewpoint. Your needs are important, and honoring your needs is important. It is beneficial to the people around you for you to be at your best, balanced, healthiest self. €



Learn more about author Julie Bjelland at [www.SensitiveConnection.com](http://www.SensitiveConnection.com).