Build Better Boundaries
A Guide and Workbook

By Dr Katherine Hofmann
Welcome!

Learning to set effective boundaries is a practice of care, respect, and healing… not only for yourself, but also for those around you.

The effect of your efforts truly ripple out with unseen positive outcomes many degrees of separation from where you are now — it is for this reason I sincerely thank you for your practice!

My intention for this guide and workbook is that you walk away with:

- Increased awareness,
- Improved self compassion,
- And, most importantly, practical tools to help you practice setting effective boundaries.

If I fall short in any way, please don’t hesitate to reach out and let me know what was missing! I can be reached most easily by email at katherine@hofmannaturopathic.com.

If we haven’t met yet, I’m Dr Katherine Hofmann, and while I’m officially a naturopathic doctor specializing in mental health and longevity, my mission is really to help folks embody their soul purpose. Of course, this looks different for everyone. My work is all about supporting folks in both figuring out what their own soul purpose is, and then helping them live it out in a way that is meaningful and satisfying for them.

When it comes to embodying YOUR soul purpose, boundaries play a crucial role — if you’re forever putting off what matters most to you, those things that bring you the most joy, you’re assuredly not going to live your best, most purposeful life. Effective boundary setting makes space for you to have interactions and experiences that make the most sense for YOU. In other words, setting effective boundaries is a foundational practice when it comes to embodying your soul purpose.

In my own life, boundaries have been an ongoing conversation in every arena, both personal and professional. The line where personal meets professional is blurry, since I both live and work with my husband. Our home is an ongoing experiment in setting/keeping/renegotiating boundaries so we can continue to grow our businesses and nourish our relationship.
I’ve been reflecting as I’ve been getting ready for this talk, and growing up, boundaries were always a big issue — my grandmother had borderline personality disorder, and absolutely zero sense of boundary. ‘No’ was never a word I could use with her to any effect, and, in fact, I remember her making me sit up and play cards with her while I was tremendously sick with a flu, because according to her, what else would I be doing anyway?

And it was with my grandmother I remember setting my very first effective boundary as well. She had done something I don’t particularly remember, but it had violated a boundary that I held as a child (I must have been 10 or so). After she had done whatever it was, I pulled every piece of interaction — I didn’t make eye contact, did not speak with her, did not acknowledge her presence in any way. In fact, we were at her office, and I went and sat in the hallway on the floor so that I wouldn’t have to be in the same room. And for the first time, she came out, told me she felt badly, apologized and asked for my forgiveness.

So this was the first time I realized I had the power to say what was or was not okay in the way I was treated.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

Where in your life are boundaries blurry?

What’s your earliest memory of setting a boundary? What was the outcome?
How aware of you that you teach people how to treat you?

Do you set expectations in your professional life? How about in your personal life? How? If not, why?

What are the hardest boundaries for you to set? Why?

What are easy boundaries for you to set? Why?

What’s your definition of a ‘boundary’?
Boundaries are simply a container for authentic, productive, and meaningful interaction.

Think about these images of boundaries that exemplify the idea that boundaries are simply a container for meaningful interaction:

1. A river — if the boundary of a river is breached, flooding occurs, potentially damaging and/or killing life in the surrounding area. If the riverbanks are intact and contain the river, however, a safe space is created for animals in and around the river, plant life, and humans to come enjoy the space.
2. Your home — Do you let anyone and everyone in your home? NO! You only allow folks in who you love and who you’ve decided to invite to share in your haven. The walls of your home, whether a house, apartment, condo, van, trailer, etc provide a bounded area for interaction with those closest to you.
3. Your own body (internally) — Consider your blood vessels, digestive system, nervous system, muscles… each compartment contains only those things that allow it to do its job. If a blood vessel boundary is breached, we call it a stroke. Cancer is the breach of just about any boundary by cells gone rogue.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How does your body shift when you consider these images of boundaries?

How does your body shift when you consider boundaries simply as a container for meaningful interaction?
What are the words you associate with the word ‘boundary’?

What Makes Boundaries Tough

Boundaries can be incredibly difficult to talk through and consider, because often, especially if you identify as a woman, there’s a lot of shame that goes along with the conversation.

One strategy to reduce shame or self blame is to get clear and understand why exactly boundaries are so challenging. There are so many aspects of your development layered in and over each other:

1. **Attachment Style** — your behaviors as an adult are based in how your primary caregivers responded to you as an *infant*. Whether or not you feel safe to depend on others, have others depend on you plays a huge role in your ability to set effective boundaries.

2. **Modeling from primary caregivers** — if the folks who raised you didn’t know how to set good boundaries, likely you don’t know how to set good boundaries!

3. **Psychological development and personal identity** (gender, race, etc)— we all progress through standard stages of psychological development, learning to see ourselves as autonomous and the world as something exterior to our inner life.

4. **Your unique constitution/personality** — traits, thought patterns and behaviors that are unique to YOU! Tools like astrology, human design, enneagram, Myers briggs, etc are commonly used to help folks understand their own personality and constitution.

5. **CULTURE**! Ranges from family culture to religious culture to national culture. All have an impact on whether or not you even think you have the right to set boundaries, and what appropriate boundary setting looks like. For our conversation, women in the US, and especially religious women in the US have been taught that we are supposed to always be amiable, take on any responsibility with a smile no matter what.
You can go down a rabbit hole in any one of these aspects (see the appendices if you’d like to), but the point is really to emphasize that there’s no reason for you to feel ashamed, or as though you’re bad or doing something wrong if you’re having trouble saying no in one way or another.

Your patterns go way, way back, from even before your conception — you picked up patterns from your parents, who picked up patterns from their parents, and back and back through the generations.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

How did your parents and/or primary caregivers do with boundaries and saying no?

Have there been people in your life who had boundaries that made them difficult to connect with?

Have there been people in your life with little to no boundary setting skills?
When you were growing up, with whom did you feel most safe? How were their boundary setting skills?

Do you find it easy to connect with others?

Do you feel okay to rely on others/have others rely on you? Why do you think that is?

What about setting boundaries scares you as an adult? Why?
Let’s talk about what it looks like when you have insufficient boundaries:

1. **Oversharing** with someone whose trustworthiness you haven’t verified (not uncommon with a history of abuse/trauma)
2. **Saying ‘yes’ by default** (without thinking the project/responsibility through)
3. Later **wishing you hadn’t said yes**
4. **Resentment**
5. **Anger** (KEY SIGN BOUNDARIES HAVE BEEN CROSSED/NOT SET)
6. High stress levels
7. **Anxiety**
8. **Poor sleep**
9. Feeling as though **everyone is taking advantage** of you
10. **Being irritable** with folks close to you
11. **Letting your priorities go** in favor of commitments you’ve signed on for by default.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

What signs let you know you haven’t been able to set good boundaries?

When you don’t set good boundaries, how are your close relationships?
Have the people closest to you notice when you haven’t been able to set good boundaries professionally?

How is your work affected when you don’t set good boundaries?

Are you afraid to set boundaries at work? Why or why not?

**Benefits of Setting Boundaries**

Some of the benefits of setting good boundaries are obvious then: These feelings of resentment, anger, irritability, anxiety, etc start to resolve. But there are more benefits besides this.

It’s important to take notice of the benefits of setting boundaries for the simple reason that learning to set effective boundaries is HARD. Knowing what you can get out of the practice can provide ongoing inspiration/motivation for you to keep practicing.

We can split the benefits into two primary categories: relationship with yourself and relationships with others.
In terms of your relationship to yourself, **you’ll start to know that you can trust and rely on yourself** more and more. If you consider a healthy parent/child dynamic, the parent sets safe limits with their child and provides a container for them to explore, but not hurt themselves or anyone else. By learning to set good boundaries, you’re doing this for yourself — **you’re teaching yourself that YOU can set a safe space for interaction and exploration, and that you’re able to keep yourself from getting seriously hurt in the process.**

At the same time, **your physical, mental, and emotional energies improve**. Being in a space of insecurity, stress, and anxiety is exhausting!! As is doing a whole bunch of work or projects that you didn’t really want to do in the first place, or picking up the slack for household members, or being an emotional reservoir for a friend when you haven’t used your resources for your own emotional well-being. **Setting boundaries allows you to reclaim that energy and start to direct it in the direction you want it to go** (remember the river example!).

In terms of relationship with others, a few things happen*:

1. **Every relationship will start to improve** (assuming it has a healthy foundation) — because you know you can keep yourself safe, you are able to be present of interactions moment to moment. Furthermore, when you can come to an interaction without resentment, anger, stress, and anxiety you are more pleasant and present with what’s showing up in the moment.

2. **Your communication skills improve** — Think of weight lifting: if you can bench press 200 lbs, 50 lbs is nothing. Similarly, the better you are at having some tough conversations, the better able you are to communicate in every other way.

3. **Your respectability and likeablity improve** — Folks have trouble setting boundaries, more often than not — if they see you’re able to set good boundaries, and that you trust yourself, then they’ll trust you too! It’s hard to find folks who are up front and honest in their communication, and when folks start to know that YOU are up front and honest, even if it’s challenging, they will want to do more business with you and spend more time with you, because THEY’LL feel safe with you (remember that boundaries are a container for meaningful interaction!!).

4. **You model that behavior for others, giving them permission to set boundaries of their own in the process**: you kids, coworkers, spouse, employees, clients, vendors… everyone! Most of us missed that modeling when we were growing up. What a gift that YOUR practice helps others gain that experience of seeing effective boundaries set!

*If your boundaries are consistently violated, this is a sign of an abusive situation. Please seek professional advise appropriate for your situation.
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What benefits would YOU like to see from your boundary setting?

Do you trust yourself? Why or why not?

What are your priorities? What does fulfillment and satisfaction in your life (personal and/or professional) look like?

Tools and Processes for Setting Good Boundaries

Let’s dive into the practical ways you can start to set good boundaries!

Before we get into that though, let’s talk interpersonal patterns and the implications on your boundary setting. When it comes to any longer term relationships (6 months or more), dynamics will shift when you start setting boundaries. This means where other folks always used to count on you for a ‘yes’ they may no longer be able to do so. Which means some ruffled feathers may ensue.

THIS IS OKAY. This is 100% normal, and is part of the learning curve of practicing boundary setting. While it can be tough to weather the storms of shifting dynamics
(especially if you’re shifting your boundaries within your family unit), hold your line and hang in there. It WILL get better.

HOWEVER, if someone is persistently disregarding and crossing your boundaries, that’s a sign that you would be well served to either stop engaging in that relationship, or that you need to engage in a more superficial, less frequent way. If frank abuse is occurring (emotional or physical) please seek support ASAP (see appendix for more resources).

Okay.

Here are things to do BEFORE you’re even in a conversation with someone.

**Have compassion and grace for yourself as best you can.** Boundary setting is a skill. Just like glass blowing, baking, gardening, roller blading, dancing…. It takes *practice*. You CAN and WILL get better. Hang in and try again tomorrow, loving yourself in the process.

**Say a word of gratitude** for your old patterns — they have served you and gotten you to this moment. You have the awareness to know it’s time to make a new habit, but you wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for some of those old patterns. Honor them through ceremony, art, writing, or just with a simple bow and word of thanks.

**Reflect** — Use the questions in this guide to get your bearings on where you are with boundaries right now, and where you want to be.

Where have your boundaries been out of balance?

Where have you been able to set good boundaries?
Connect with your body — This is the best tool I know of to help folks make any behavior and thought pattern change. Your body provides real-time feedback, faster than your thoughts or emotions. Gut feelings are real, and usually, if you think of an instance when you wished you had done something differently, you can pinpoint a moment when your body told you not to do the thing. Do the exercises below, and use that information to guide you in future conversations. You can use this in any context — your body responds similarly whether you're in a board room, on a client call, or sitting in the kitchen with your spouse.

**EXERCISE**: Take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and consider a recent situation when you *wished* you had set a boundary. Remember back to the very moment you knew you wanted to change the course of the conversation. What sensations come up in your body? Write them here if you like:

Again, take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes and consider a recent situation when you set an effective boundary. Remember back to the very moment you changed the course of the conversation. What sensations come up in your body? Write them here if you like:
HAVE STOCK PHRASES READY

Most folks freeze up in the moment and don’t know what to say to get out of something. Practice, practice, practice 10 or so stock phrases for the situations most difficult for you when it comes to setting boundaries. Put them by your computer, your phone, on your mirror or fridge — wherever you need to keep them in your mind, so that when you need to use them, they tumble right out of your mouth without a second thought. While I’ve provided a fairly comprehensive list of ways to say no in the appendices, there are three main categories of stock phrases I recommend:

**Give yourself time to think/process**
1. Let me think about that…
2. Can you call me back in a few days?
3. Let’s talk next week.

**Offer an alternative**
4. I can’t ______, but I can ________.
5. That’s not an option for me right now… have you asked ________.
6. Have you considered working with __________.

**Formulaic:** Add the following components together for a respectful ‘Nope!’

*Positive aspect of that proposal/person/project*

PLUS

*reason why not* (not a good time/too busy/not the expert/not initial agreement)

PLUS/MINUS alternative.

Examples:
1. I’m honored you thought of me! My plate is really full right now… Have you considered ________.
2. You have a lot of really great ideas, and I can tell you’re so passionate about your work. Per our contract/agreement/proposal, I can dedicate 10 hours to our project together — what is your priority here?
3. You have a lot of really great ideas, and I can tell you’re passionate about your work! How about I send over a new proposal that will take this conversation into account?
4. You sound really frustrated/upset. I can’t ________, but I can offer you ________/refer you to ________ who might better be able to meet your needs.

5. It really matters to me that your goals are met through our work together, and I’m hearing that right now you’re not getting what you’d like. What you’re asking for is really outside the scope of your agreement — I can offer you __________ package, which would meet your needs.

6. I’d love to help. In order for me to __[insert service]__, I need __________.

Pre-Script conversations — This one may sound a little bit ‘out there’ but imagining the desired outcome of a conversation shifts your nervous system and makes that outcome more likely. There’s part of your brain called the default mode network that, if it thinks something already happened, finds confirmation and adjusts your behavior. Again, without your conscious awareness. This is a practice I engage in almost daily, and more often than not, conversations actually go better than I had imagined. There are two ways to do this practice:

1. Write out your best version of a conversation, full-on script style.
2. Simply close your eyes and imagine a phrase you’d like to hear from the other person. Put your whole body in that space, as though it is actually happening. What sensations do you experience in your body? Open your eyes and go on with your day.

Run worst case scenarios — If you know the absolute worst case scenario, you can plan for it. A client doesn’t sign, your spouse sulks, your kids throw a tantrum, you get push-back and have to say your stock phrase over and over… what is the most realistic worst case scenario for a given boundary you’d like to set? If that happens, how do you deal?

Set Expectations — Setting expectations is the simple act of letting folks know what’s coming. What can you do, where and when can you show up, and where is outside of your scope. Setting expectations is a pro-active way to set boundaries, as you’re addressing an issue before it comes up.

Professionally, this shows up in your website copy, social media presence, email marketing, networking, consult calls, proposals/agreements, and meetings with supervisors and/or coworkers. Any expectation setting with clients should be in writing; emails with coworkers and supervisors or employees is great to have in an email or
Having professional expectations in writing allows direct reference back to them if scenarios get twisted in one way or another.

Personally, this shows up by being specific about time, place, and manner. Learn to say things like:

• “I can’t clear the sink while I’m working in the day, but I can take care of it after 6 tonight.”
• “I can take the dog out first thing in the morning, but I need you or the kids to take care of it for the rest of the day.”
• “Let’s not talk about the news after 7:00PM.”
• “Let’s keep the grocery list in one place so we don’t miss anything — if you finish something, please put it on the electronic list I use when I do the shopping. If it’s not on the list, it’s likely I’ll forget it, and you’ll have to wait until the next week.”
• “I have late meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday — can you please take care of dinner on those nights?”
• “You’re a really good friend and I love you… Your anxiety seems really intense lately. Have you considered talking to a professional for support?”
• “Safety and health are values we share as a family, so friends are not allowed in our home during COVID. We can organize Zoom group calls or see one friend at a time outside at a part, keeping our distance while wearing masks!”

Again, there is a (sometimes very steep) learning curve when it comes to setting new boundaries with family. Hang in there, and hold your line. It will get better!

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

What are your most difficult professional situations for setting boundaries?

What 5 stock phrases would be helpful?
How will you remember them when you need them?

How will you set expectations in professional settings?

What are your most difficult personal situations for setting boundaries?

What 5 stock phrases would be helpful?

How will you remember them when you need them?

How will you set expectations in personal settings?
Holding Your Boundaries In Conversation

It would be AMAZING if I could give you a hack to make holding your line easier, but the truth is you kind of just have to hang in and hold tight. Know that sometimes boundary setting is easy — folks are responsive and amenable. Other times, they just really don’t want to hear it, and will push back. If you find yourself in the midst of the latter kind of interaction, here are ten things to keep in mind as you go:

1. **Why** are you setting a boundary? Keep this in mind to help you keep up your courage.

2. Deploy those **stock phrases**!! Hopefully you’ve practiced them — USE THEM!

3. **Call out the discomfort.** You can tell if someone else is uncomfortable, even if it’s over the phone. Just saying that you’re uncomfortable saying no or setting a boundary eases the discomfort. “You know, I really want to help, and it feels so uncomfortable for me to say no, but I just can’t take that on right now.”

4. **Be calm!** This is most important when the person you’re talking to gets angry that you’re holding a boundary. If you buy in and also get upset, the situation will absolutely escalate. BUT if you can stay calm and simply restate your position, the other side will come around one way or another.

5. **Offer acceptable options.** This works really well with little kids and it works equally well with a difficult person who doesn’t want to hear what you have to say. In this scenario, offer two options you deem acceptable. Some examples:

   - I can complete the project hours we agreed to, or I can send you an updated proposal.
   - We can get dinner from Chipotle or Baja Fresh — which would you prefer?
   - I can get the new client project done by Friday, or finish the proposal for the prospective. What’s your priority?
   - You can do the laundry or empty the dishwasher — which would you like?
   - You can let me know if you’re committed by Tuesday, or I can put you on the waitlist for the next cycle of new clients.
   - We can go out to eat tonight, or put that money in our vacation fund.
   - Would you like to go on a hike or a bike ride?
6. **Speak clearly and confidently** — you have a voice for a reason. You may be terrified to set a boundary, you don’t know what you’re going to get back. The more clearly and confidently you speak, the more weight your words will hold (tone matters more than content in verbal communication), and the easier the conversation will be overall.

7. **Say what you mean** — you’re a caring person, and you want to help. You also are learning to hold true to your priorities. Simply be honest and up front with the person you’re talking with. They’ll appreciate you’re not playing games with them, and they have all the information.

8. **Stand your ground** — This goes hand in hand with staying calm and offering acceptable options. You may feel like a broken record in some conversations with boundaries, but this really and truly is the work of how it’s done. Restate, restate, restate, offering the same options. “It sounds like you’re wanting ____/upset/[what you’re hearing from the other person]. As I said…. [repeat stock phrase]. I can complete the project hours we agreed to, or I can send you an updated proposal.

9. **Set consequences**, if needed. This is particularly relevant for parenting and if you’re working with employees or vendors. Note: ONLY set consequences you can and will follow through on; and remember, rewards are more effective than punishment in general. Some examples:

   • If you don’t clean up the kitchen table when you go to bed, I will recycle the papers left out.
   • If you’re not ready to go when it’s time to leave, you’ll need to take public transit.
   • This project needs to be completed by Wednesday; if your part isn’t done, you’ll be reassigned.
   • These seeds have been left out for a week; if they’re still out tomorrow, I’ll pile them on your workbench in the garage.
   • Family dinners are mandatory — if you’re not here, you’ll lose phone privileges for a week.

10. **Follow through!** People test boundaries. If you were a teenager, or you know a teenager, you know this. Hold your line, and stand your ground. If you’ve set a boundary with a consequence, **you must carry out the consequence if they don’t hold up their end.**
Appendix 1

Stock Phrase Database!!

• How am I supposed to do that? (A favorite of Chris Voss, former FBI hostage negotiator)
• My word of the year is rest, so I can’t fit something else in.
• Nope.
• No thanks, I won’t be able to make it.
• Not this time.
• Regrettably, I’m not able to.
• It's that time of the year when I must say no.
• Ask me in a week/month/year.
• I know someone that might be a fit for that. I'll email you their information.
• You're so kind to think of me, but I can't.
• Maybe another time.
• That sounds wonderful, but I can’t commit.
• Rats! Would’ve loved to.
• I’m slammed right now. Call me in a month?
• Perhaps next season when things clear up.
• I’m really at the end of my rope right now so have to take a raincheck.
• I’m so sorry; I’ll need to bow out.
• I’m going to have to exert my NO muscle on this one.
• I’m taking some time, and need to pass.
• Thanks for thinking of me, but I can’t.
• I’m in a season of NO.
• I’m not the person for you on this one.
• I’m learning to limit my commitments, and need to say no.
• I’m not taking on new things right now.
• Another time might work — circle back next month.
• It doesn’t sound like the right fit for that.
• I’m not sure I’m the best for that.
• No thank you, but it sounds lovely.
• It sounds like you’re looking for something I’m not able to give right now.
• It’s not a good idea for me.
• Not now.
• I’m cutting back — have you talked to ________?
• I won’t be able to help on this one.
• Oh, I wish I had a clone!
• I’m not able to set aside the time needed.
• I won’t be able to dedicate the time I need to it.
• I’m nose-down right now on a big project, so won’t be able to.
• I wish there were two of me!
• I’m honored, but can’t.
• I have something else booked.
• I’m not able to make that time.
• Thanks, but no thanks.
• I’m not able to make it this week/month/year.
• I’ve got too much on my plate right now.
• I’m not taking on anything else right now.
• Bandwidth is low, so I won’t be able to make it work.
• I wish I could make it work.
• I wish I could!
• If only I could!
• I’d love to — but can’t.
• Darn! Not able to fit it in.
• Nah.
• No thanks, I have another commitment.
• Unfortunately, it’s not a good time for me.
• Sadly I have something else on the books.
• Unfortunately not.
• I have something else. Sorry.
• Apologies, but I can’t make it.
• Thank you so much for asking. Can you keep me on your list for next year?
• I’m flattered you considered me, but unfortunately I’ll have to pass this time.
• Thank you for thinking of me. Unfortunately it’s just not a match.
• No, that’s not really my thing. I can recommend __________.
• Can I get back to you on that?
• Ew.
• No, I’d rather you didn’t, but thanks anyway.
• I can't make it work.
• I'm really buckling down on my priorities right now, so I can't.
• No say I.
• What's the compensation?
• How much are you able/willing to pay?
• Are you able to better that offer?
• Sorry, no can do.
• I only say yes to very select opportunities, and unfortunately this doesn't meet my criteria.
• I’m only committing to what I can give my full attention to, and I’m at capacity.
• The demands would be too much for me.
• It's not feasible for me to take this on.
• I wish I had all the time in the world.
• My body double can.
• My advisors won't agree to it.
• My body says yes, but my heart says No.
• I don't have an iota of bandwidth left.
• If only.
• No, I’m not interested.
• It’s sounds like a great cause, but we are giving to something else this year.
• No, thank you.
• No, I can’t tonight.
• Unfortunately, it’s a not a good time.
• Thanks for asking, but I’m not available that day.
• That sounds like fun! But I’m already committed to something so I won’t be able to join.
• That does sound like something the kiddos would enjoy! But we’re already committed to something that day.
• No thank you, but that sounds fun, have a good time!
• Thanks for thinking of me, but I can’t.
• I’m not interested, but I can give some thought to who might be interested if that would be helpful.
• No thanks, I have another commitment.
• I wish I could make it work.
• Thanks, but I can’t.
• That’s not really for me, but thank you.
• Sounds tempting, but I have to pass.
• I’d like to, but I know I’ll regret it if I don’t get to bed on time.
• I really appreciate you asking me, but I can’t commit to that right now.
• You know, I’ve been there once and it really wasn’t for me.
• I won’t be able to join this year.
• I have other plans, but thank you!
• I won’t be able to help.
• I’m all set.
• I’m not interested.
• I’m not taking anything else on right now.
• I’m not really into it, but thanks for asking!
• Sadly, I have something else planned.
• Darn! I’m not able to fit that in this week.
• I’m not able to make it this month.
• My plans are already set that weekend.
• Sadly, I have something else.
• That doesn’t work for me.
• Sounds great, but I can’t commit.
• I’m not able to make that time.
• I’ve got too much on my plate right now.
• It’s not possible with my schedule right now.
• I’m trying to honor my family time right now, I can’t commit.
• I have other priorities that are more important right now.
• I’m really working on say no so I can say yes to my family. I’m going to have to say no this time.
• I don’t have time to prioritize that.
• I have to bow out of this one.
• I can’t make it.
• That’s so sweet of you, but I can’t make it work tonight.
• Not this time.
• Thanks for thinking of me, I really wish I could.
• I’m not available.
• That’s not going to work for me.
• No thanks.
• No.
• I’ll pass.
• That’s not my thing.
• We have plans that weekend.
• My schedule is already full.
• Sounds fun, but I’m not available.
• Thanks, but I’m not taking anything else on right now.
• No thanks, I can’t.
• I can’t prioritize that right now.
• I’m not comfortable with that.
• No, I need to focus on other priorities.
• I don’t have the time to dedicate to that right now.
• I’m not able to commit the time I need for that right now.
• I’d rather not, thanks for asking.
• I can’t make it.
• I wish I could make it work.
• I’d love to, but I can’t this year.
• No, I have plans tonight.
• I’d like to help, but I can’t make that time work.
• That time doesn’t work for me.
• That isn’t doable for me right now.
• I know this is important to you, but I can’t.
• I’m afraid that won’t work.
• I’m already committed to something. Best of luck!
• No, I’m not planning on it.
• It’s not on my list right now.
• No, thank you so much for reaching out to me though.
• Now is not a good time.
• It means a lot that you thought of me, but I already have plans that night.
• I need to say no.
• I’m not interested, but I can give some thought to who might be interested if that would be helpful.
• I can’t do _______, but I’d be happy to ________.
• I’d like to help, but I’m not available that week. Is there another option?
• I can’t tonight, but I’d love to another time.
• Not now, but another time might work.
• Not tonight, but I’d be up for it in the next few weeks.
• I need to take a rain check.
• I can’t, if something changes I’ll let you know.
• I have to bow out this year, but I’ll look into next year!
• Thank you for asking! I’d be interested in hearing more, but I can’t this month.
• I can’t commit to this last minute, can we plan something in a few weeks?
• I can’t this month, will you reach out to me in the spring to ask again?
• Not right now, but I can do it later.
• I’ll let you know when I’m able to do that.
• I can’t this week, but if you reach out to me a few weeks ahead of time I can get a sitter and make it work!
• I can’t this time, but I’d be happy to join in the future.
Appendix 2: Reflection Questions, consolidated

These are all the reflection questions within this guide and workbook, aggregated in one place for your easy reference and use.

Where in your life are boundaries blurry?

What’s your earliest memory of setting a boundary? What was the outcome?

How aware of you that you teach people how to treat you?

Do you set expectations in your professional life? How about in your personal life? How? If not, why?

What are the hardest boundaries for you to set? Why?

What are easy boundaries for you to set? Why?

What’s your definition of a ‘boundary’?

How does your body shift when you consider these images of boundaries?

How does your body shift when you consider boundaries simply as a container for meaningful interaction?

What are the words you associate with the word ‘boundary’?

How did your parents and/or primary caregivers do with boundaries and saying no?

Have there been people in your life who had boundaries that made them difficult to connect with?

Have there been people in your life with little to no boundary setting skills?

When you were growing up, with whom did you feel most safe? How were their boundary setting skills?

Do you find it easy to connect with others?

Do you feel okay to rely on others/have others rely on you? Why do you think that is?
What about setting boundaries scares you as an adult? Why?

What signs let you know you haven’t been able to set good boundaries?

When you don’t set good boundaries, how are your close relationships?

Have the people closest to you notice when you haven’t been able to set good boundaries professionally?

How is your work affected when you don’t set good boundaries?

Are you afraid to set boundaries at work? Why or why not?

What benefits would YOU like to see from your boundary setting?

Do you trust yourself? Why or why not?

What are your priorities? What does fulfillment and satisfaction in your life (personal and/or professional) look like?

Where have your boundaries been out of balance?

Where have you been able to set good boundaries?

What are your most difficult professional situations for setting boundaries?

What 5 stock phrases would be helpful?

How will you remember them when you need them?

How will you set expectations in professional settings?

What are your most difficult personal situations for setting boundaries?

What 5 stock phrases would be helpful?

How will you remember them when you need them?

How will you set expectations in personal settings?
Appendix 3: Psychology Resources

Note: resources are hyperlinked in parenthesis

1. Attachment Style
   - How Your Attachment Style Impacts Your Relationship (Psychology Today)
   - Four Styles of Adult Attachment (Evergreen Psychotherapy Center)
   - Attachment Styles and Their Role in Relationships (The Attachment Project)

2. Psychological development and personal identity
   - Developmental Psychology (Very Well Mind)

3. Your unique constitution/personality
   - Meyers Briggs (Free assessment)
   - Enneagram (Find your number)
   - Astrological Chart (See your birth chart)
   - Human Design (Jovian Archive)

Appendix 4: Abuse Support

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: https://www.thehotline.org 1-800-799-7233
Text help available via website

For survivors of domestic violence: liveyourdream.org

For a directory of currently available resources: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.ncadv.org 303-839-1852

Appendix 5: Additional Resources

*Anger as Awareness*, by Dr. Katherine Hofmann

*Never Split the Difference*, by Chris Voss

*The Like Switch*, by Jack Schafer

*Women Who Run With the Wolves*, by Clarissa Pinkola Estés

*161 Negotiation Tactics*, by Martin Medeiros

*The 4 Tendencies*, by Gretchen Rubin