

# SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES



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EMPOWER PEOPLE. ENHANCE EXPERIENCE. ENRICH LIFE.

## *Healthy Boundaries* **A Key Leadership Attribute**

### What Boundaries Are

Boundaries are natural limits we define for ourselves and others that we express to survive and thrive. Unfortunately, I observe in myself and my clients that boundaries are often neglected to please the needs or urgencies of people we love or cooperate with. The lack of boundaries ultimately leads to discomfort and stress as it creates unmanageable schedules and timelines. Moreover, we navigate in a world running at a fast pace, reducing even more our time to think and to even notice we have been on a treadmill for too long.



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## Why It Matters

Setting healthy boundaries requires self-awareness. Indeed, most of my clients blame time, the workload, the economy, or others for the stress and discomfort they feel. They do not initially question their ability to evaluate their resources and draw a clear line of what is humanely possible and what's not. Self-reflection and inquiries enable fair appraisal and prioritization, which in turn become material for healthy boundaries.

Professionals and leaders capable of such assessment thrive, grow faster, and avoid burnout. When we do not set clear boundaries, we are at the effect of our environment and focus on external circumstances by either feeling overwhelmed and powerless or frustrated and angry. No wonder, we experience exhaustion and stress. Those catabolic emotions leave us depleted of our energy.

## The Importance of Boundaries for Female Leaders

Setting boundaries is important for female leaders who want to have sustainable leadership careers to:

- **Prevent burnout:** By establishing clear limits, leaders can avoid feeling overwhelmed and stressed. Leadership careers are marathons not sprints.

- **Improve work-life balance:** Setting boundaries can help leaders create a healthier balance between their professional and personal lives increasing capacity, energy and overall fulfillment by limiting guilt and overwhelm.
- **Enhance leadership effectiveness:** Strong boundaries can empower leaders to make strategic decisions, delegate effectively, and inspire their teams. Indeed, team members respect and follow leaders who are humans not super heroes.
- **Foster a positive workplace culture:** When leaders set clear boundaries, they create a more respectful and inclusive environment for all employees by leading by example.

## Challenges Faced by Female Leaders in Setting Boundaries

Mindsets are shifting collectively yet some specific challenges are encountered by women in cultures and organizations where the conversations are not happening. Stereotypes are still held to be true by both women and men when it comes to the following:

- **Societal Expectations:** Women are often socialized to be nurturing, caring, and selfless. These cultural pressures can make it difficult for



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- women to set boundaries, as they may fear being seen as selfish, uncooperative, or difficult. Often limiting beliefs or spirit of time which are reminiscence of past behaviors not yet fully deprecated.
- Imposter Syndrome: The belief that you're not as capable as others perceive you to be can hinder your ability to set boundaries. Women tend to think that as they grow as leaders they must know it all and do everything they were used to in their past role and add more. Taking a new role means wearing a new costume, not adding one above the old one.
- Work-Life Balance Challenges: Balancing professional and personal responsibilities can be particularly difficult for female leaders, especially those who are mothers or caregivers.
- The Glass Ceiling: The invisible barriers (internal and external) that prevents women from advancing to top leadership positions can create a hostile work environment and make it difficult to set boundaries.  
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/shattering-glass-ceiling-from-within-belinda-mj-brown-mcc-owthe/>
- Discrimination and Bias: Women may face discrimination and bias in the workplace, which can make it challenging to assert themselves and set boundaries. If this is the case, explore how to reclaim internal power to leave the catabolic energy.

## A Key Leadership Skill

Setting healthy boundaries is a key leadership skill for sustainable leadership. If you aspire to make an impact and live a fulfilled life, do a quick check to ensure you have the necessary tools and mindset to hold boundaries.

- Do I find myself running after time?
- Do I feel guilty when I say "no"?
- Do I have a clear roadmap of my top 3 objectives for the year?
- Do I find myself in firefighting mode more than once a week?
- Do I tolerate more work than I can and compensate at home?
- Do I feel frustrated by people saying no to me?

If you answered yes to more than 2 of those questions, chances are you have not yet mastered the skill of setting boundaries. Women seem more conditioned to believe they must attend to others' needs and help. Helping does not mean doing for others or compromising our own balance. Self-care is also about saying "Yes" to self before saying "Yes" to others.

## Stepping Back and Shifting Your Focus

Taking responsibility and stepping back



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are the first steps to create an environment that will support you to navigate the complexity of our current workplace. Responsibility means claiming your power back to think, appraise, and prioritize. I invite my clients to observe the situation as if they were watching a movie or a show. What do they see now that they can influence? What are the elements they would like to see changing? What are the resources available to make a first step towards change?

By feeling in charge, leaders craft a clear vision and deploy creative strategies that include negotiables and non-negotiables and variables. Skills they have been mastering for years they can effectively apply to their own benefits. They recognize their capacity, the priorities, and identify new paths to cooperate differently with their environment.

With a clear vision and a reasonable plan, they find themselves communicating effectively their needs, their limits, and start to say "No" in order to say "Yes" to what matters the most for them, their teams, and the organization they serve.

Back in coaching sessions, they are amazed by the simplicity of the process and notice that successful leaders around them are operating with a similar mindset.

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges Specifically for Women

- **Challenge Societal Expectations:** Recognize and challenge harmful societal stereotypes that discourage women from setting boundaries.
- **Address Imposter Syndrome:** Build self-confidence by focusing on your accomplishments and strengths. Seek support from mentors or peers.
- **Prioritize Self-Care:** Take care of your physical, mental, and emotional health to improve your resilience and ability to set boundaries: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/self-care-caring-others-belinda-mj-brown-mcc-sfvke/>
- **Negotiate Effectively:** Develop strong negotiation skills to communicate your needs and expectations clearly and assertively.
- **Build a Support Network:** Surround yourself with supportive colleagues, mentors, and friends who can offer encouragement and advice.
- **Practice Self-Compassion:** Be kind to yourself and avoid self-criticism. Remember that it's okay to prioritize your own needs.
- **Set Realistic Expectations:** Avoid setting unrealistic goals or expectations that can lead to burnout.
- **Delegate Effectively:** Learn to delegate tasks to your team members to free up your time and reduce stress.



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- **Communicate Clearly:** Be clear and direct when communicating your boundaries to others. Use "I" statements to express your needs and avoid blaming or accusing.
- **Practice Saying 'No'** Don't be afraid to say 'no' when you're feeling overwhelmed or overcommitted. It's important to prioritize your own well-being. Remember saying No translates into saying Yes to something that matters most to you, your team

## The Butterfly Effect

Naturally, the real opportunity for change. Indeed, time becomes fluid, last-minute demands are less frequent, and colleagues who once were "pushy" become proactive in their requests. Instead of feeling at the effect of your environment, you feel bolstered. Confidence, cooperation, co-creation, and influence develop rapidly, which turn out to save time, increase productivity, and grow individual, and collective performance.

Each moment we have the opportunity to make a small change that will ultimately have a greater impact.

## Happy Client

- Y., the Female Controller aiming for CFO role in a Male-Dominated Industry: Y., a Controller in the waste management

industry, faced significant challenges in setting boundaries, particularly in a male-dominated environment. By clearly communicating her expectations upward and downward, delegating effectively, and prioritizing self-care, Y. was able to establish herself as a respected leader and create a more inclusive workplace.

Thanks for reading and commenting on this article. It encourages me to continue sharing more content.

Meanwhile, if you are interested in reclaiming your power and navigating corporate turbulence, join our exclusive book study group Lead Her Ship, <https://lead-her-ship-book-study-2372jct.gamma.site/>. It starts on October 11th and the book we will explore is Uncovering the life of your dreams: an enlightening story by Bruce D. Schneider. A great opportunity to reflect, learn from and connect with peers.

## Resources:

Catabolic and anabolic energy:  
<https://www.ipeccoaching.com/blog/energy-leadership-index>

A Guide to Setting Better Boundaries  
<https://hbr.org/2022/04/a-guide-to-setting-better-boundaries>

Forget Quiet Quitting. Heres How to



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Actually Set Boundaries at Work

[https://time.com/6212149/how-to-set-](https://time.com/6212149/how-to-set-boundaries-at-work-quiet-quitting/)

[boundaries-at-work-quiet-quitting/](https://time.com/6212149/how-to-set-boundaries-at-work-quiet-quitting/)

Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships,  
and Being Ridiculously in Charge

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