

Part 6 of a 7 part series

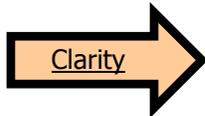
The Skill of MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

By Miriam Bamberger and
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When we operate within our own personal limits, we have the energy to maintain our professional and personal commitments.

Each part in this series will introduce an important fundamental skill that every effective legal professional will need to manage complex work relationships.

We will explore each skill using *The Flourishing Process* -



What is the skill of *Maintaining Boundaries*?

Maintaining boundaries is the skill of defining and enforcing our personal limits to support what is important to us.

What's important about mastering the skill of *Maintaining Boundaries*?

We all have limits. When we operate within our own personal limits, we have the energy to maintain our professional and personal commitments. When we are pulled beyond our limits, we do not have enough energy left for the things we really care about.

Benefits of *Maintaining Boundaries*

Clearly understanding and enforcing our boundaries helps prevent over promising, under delivering and burnout. When we understand and insist on our boundaries, we gain more clarity and more control over your schedule. We are able to set realistic goals and commitments, and enjoy satisfactory life balance.



If you don't name your boundaries, you cannot expect others to respect them.



How to Maintain Boundaries

Step 1 – Understand your capacity. Ask yourself: what's possible?

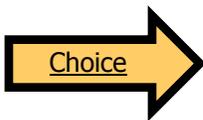
- How much time/money/etc do you have?

Step 2 – Understand what's important to you. Ask yourself: what's preferable?

- How much is enough? How much is too much?
- What is unacceptable?

Step 3 – Define your boundaries.

- What must you say 'yes' to?
- What do you need to say 'no' to?



It can be easy to paint an idyllic picture. It is another thing to make it real.

One of the biggest barriers to creating the life we want is not fully committing to it. We say we want more of this or less of that, but we don't fully commit to the new set of tradeoffs required.

Setting clear boundaries isn't always easy. Values such as financial freedom and passion for our work often collide with one another and are complicated by the "shoulds" imposed by others. Have you ever thought "I should help out on this project because someone else is counting on me"?

How you choose to react in the face of circumstances like these is up to you. Each of us must make our own choices. Without an active and deliberate choice, nothing will change.

- How are you currently approaching your boundaries?
- How would you like to approach them?
- What tradeoffs do you need to make?

Complete this sentence:

Today I choose _____.

Examples:

Today I choose to say no to social events that drain me.

Today I choose to say no to requests that I don't want to accept.



Once you have made your choice, you need to decide what to do next. What will you do right now? Today? By the end of the week?

Examples:

Right now, I will analyze how I use my time each week.

By the end of the day, I will decide on three things to say no to.



Maintaining Boundaries Do's

Do watch the signs of porous boundaries:

- Increased level of frustration
- Burnout/Stress
- Fatigue
- Overwhelm/being overscheduled
- Fear of saying no

Do pay attention to what you are saying

- "Sure, I'd be glad to do that. And that. And that."
- "I can't say no!"

Do say "no" when you want to.

- That sounds like so much fun! But it's just not for me.
- I understand there are consequences when I say no to this, but I'm willing to live with those consequences.
- You've been so good to me, but I need to say no to this. Is there something else I can do instead?
- I would love to chat, but this is part of my business day and I need to stay focused on my work. How about tonight?

Recommended Reading

Getting to Yes
The Inner Game of Work
Leadership and the Art of Conversation

Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton
Timothy Gallwey
Kim H. Krisco

