

Setting Boundaries

A GUIDE TO RECLAIMING YOUR AUTONOMY

Boundaries are essential for creating a healthy sense of self and protecting your emotional well-being. After experiencing religious trauma, it can be challenging to set boundaries, especially if you've been taught to prioritize others' needs over your own.

What Are Boundaries?

Boundaries are limits you set to protect your emotional, physical, and mental well-being. They help define what is acceptable behavior from others and communicate your needs effectively.

Types of Boundaries:

- Physical: Personal space, physical touch.
- Emotional: Sharing feelings, emotional labor.
- Time: How you spend your time, availability.
- Relational: Relationships that feel safe or unsafe.
- Spiritual: Respect for your beliefs and practices.

Why Are Boundaries Important?

- Promote self-respect and autonomy.
- Reduce stress and resentment by clarifying expectations.
- Foster healthy relationships by maintaining mutual respect.
- Support the healing process by creating a safe environment for personal growth.

How to Identify the Need for Boundaries

Ask yourself:

- Do I feel drained or anxious around certain people?
- Do I struggle to say no without guilt?
- Am I compromising my values or comfort to please others?
- Do I feel resentment toward others for overstepping?

Reflect on your answers to identify areas where boundaries may be needed.

How to Set Boundaries

Define Your Limits:

- Identify what you are comfortable with and what you are not willing to tolerate. For example, “I need time to think before making decisions.”

Communicate Clearly:

- Use “I” statements to express your needs.
 - Example: “I need some time alone on Sundays to recharge.”

Be Consistent:

- Reinforce your boundaries if they are tested. Repeat your statement calmly if necessary.

Expect Pushback:

- Understand that some people may resist your boundaries, especially if they benefited from you not having them.

Practice Self-Compassion:

- Remind yourself that setting boundaries is not selfish—it is necessary for your well-being.

Scripts for Setting Boundaries

With family:

- “I appreciate your concern, but I’d prefer to make this decision on my own.”

With friends:

- “I can’t commit to that right now, but thank you for asking.”

In religious settings:

- “I am choosing to explore my own beliefs right now, and I’d appreciate your respect for my journey.”

Handling Guilt and Resistance

It’s common to feel guilt when setting boundaries, especially if you’ve been conditioned to prioritize others over yourself. Use these strategies

- Remind yourself that boundaries are a sign of self-respect, not rejection of others.
- Seek support from trusted friends, therapists, or support groups.
- Practice affirmations like: “I deserve to feel safe and respected.”

Reflect and Adjust

- Evaluate Your Boundaries: Regularly assess whether your boundaries are effective and adjust as needed.
- Celebrate Progress: Acknowledge your efforts to reclaim your autonomy and honor your needs.