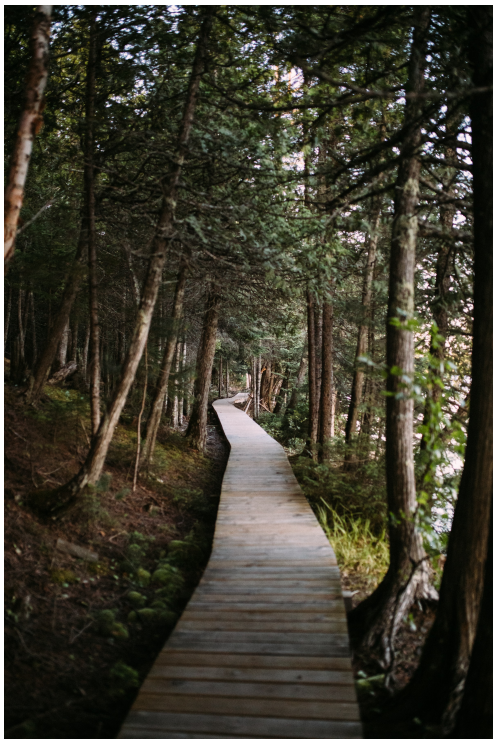
Using Mindfulness to Create Boundaries



Boundaries are statements of intent that you put in place to protect you from the conflicting demands of daily life. They are also a set of strategies or intentional decisions that you make about your life. It is knowing what to let in and what to leave out in order to act with radical self-care.

Boundaries are key to practicing self-care and self-respect. They help us make time and space for what's important to us, so we can avoid the burnout of being and doing it all. They assist us in setting limits in relationships so they may be healthy. Boundaries teach us to show compassion and kindness towards ourselves. They promote mental and emotional health, empowerment of others, and personal autonomy.

What does this have to do with mindfulness? It comes down to awareness. When we are in a mind*less* state (i.e an unaware state), we may not even realize that we are giving our power away. In addition, mindfulness can help with how we *deliver* and *communicate* our boundaries.

Here are 7 tips to create mindful boundaries for radical self-care:

1. **Know your values.** You can't know what your boundaries are if you don't evaluate what's most important to you in life.
2. **Be self-aware.** Notice feelings of guilt, shame, etc. when setting a boundary and don't judge them. Instead observe the feeling and understand it is impermanent.
3. **What does your body say?** Our bodies are very intelligent. When you consider what it would feel like to say yes or no, how does each option feel? Heavy or light? Typically we want to follow the feelings that are light and energized, as these are the best options for us. Tap into your breath. Our breath never lies and is the fastest way to go within and become present.
4. **Empower others**. When you say no to someone they must draw on their own resources. This is powerful in so many ways for you and the other person.
5. **Create respect.** Boundaries increase the level of respect you have for each other.
6. **Take care of yourself first.** You can't give to others what you don't have. Fill your own cup first and you will be a better version of yourself to offer to the world.

7. Practice the ***YES-NO-YES* STRATEGY FOR SAYING *NO***

a) Pause: Gives you time to consider the best way to respond

b) The first Yes: An acknowledgement

c) No: An assertion

d) Yes: Recommending support

Example: You are asked to take on a project at work. You are already overstretched in your workload.

Boundary: *(Acknowledgement)* "**Thank you for the opportunity. It sounds like an exciting project".** *(Assertion)* **Unfortunately my plate is full at the moment and I won't be able to give this the attention it deserves.** *(Recommending support)* **Perhaps I can refer you to someone else that can help".**

In summary, there are many opportunities and ways to practice setting boundaries. It's a habit that gets more engrained with time. It won't be perfect in the beginning. You'll likely feel awkward and unconfident, but similar to other mindfulness practices, like a muscle, we need to exercise it often to get the results we want.

Start off with awareness.

What are your values?

What feels out of alignment with those values?

What small steps can you take to start changing the trajectory of your life in these areas, and how can you build on those?

Who do you need to open up to?

What supports systems do you need to put in place?

Then notice the positive feelings you experience when you start setting and practicing boundaries. Use that as inspiration to continue putting yourself first. You're worth it.