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THE HELPING
PROFESSIONAL'S GUIDE
TO BOUNDARY SETTING

Hello Beautiful!

I CREATED THIS GUIDE AS A RESOURCE FOR YOU TO LEARN HOW TO SET NECESSARY BOUNDARIES IN THE WORKPLACE TO INCREASE YOUR JOB SATISFACTION, INCREASE FEELINGS OF COMPETENCE AND WORTH, AND LESSEN YOUR RISK OF BURNOUT.

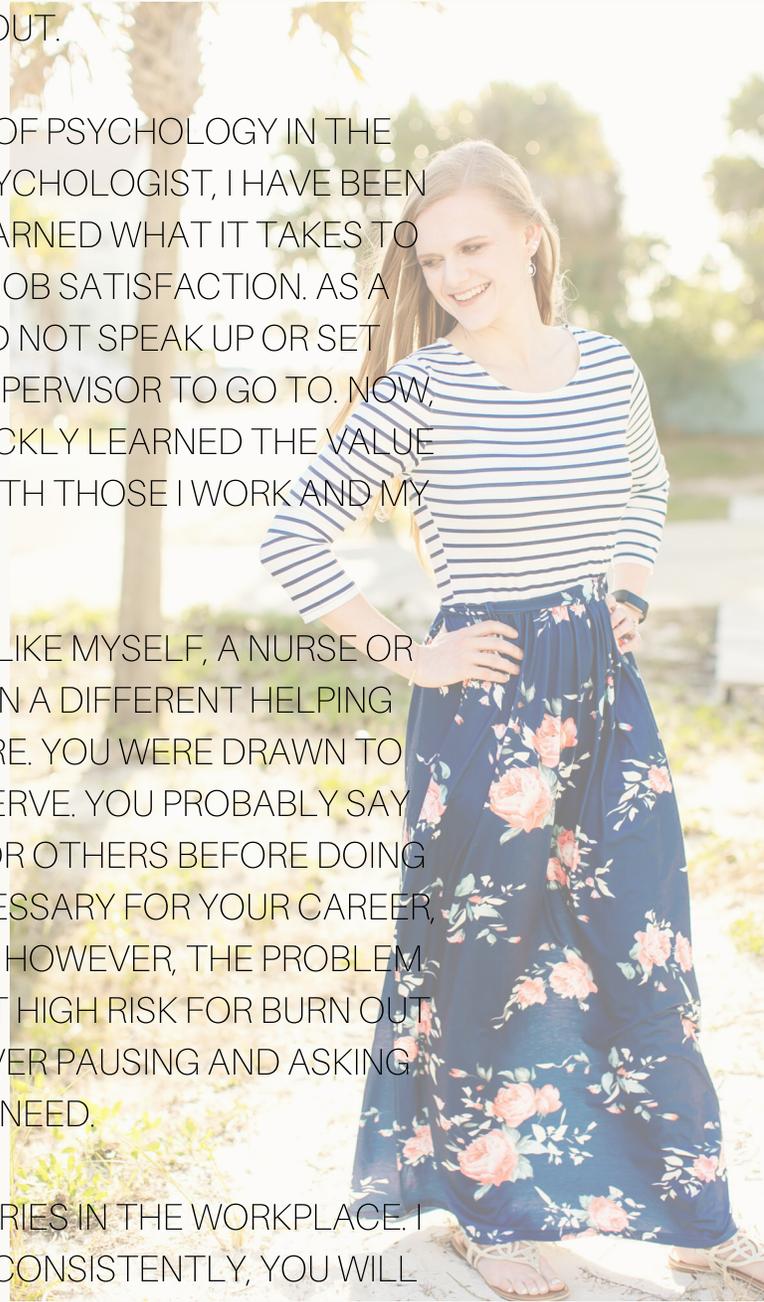
ALTHOUGH I AM RELATIVELY NEW TO THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY IN THE SENSE OF BEING AN INDEPENDENTLY LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST, I HAVE BEEN WORKING IN THE FIELD FOR 9 YEARS AND HAVE LEARNED WHAT IT TAKES TO SET NECESSARY BOUNDARIES TO INCREASE MY JOB SATISFACTION. AS A GRADUATE STUDENT, I OFTEN FELT LIKE I COULD NOT SPEAK UP OR SET BOUNDARIES; HOWEVER, I ALWAYS KNEW I HAD A SUPERVISOR TO GO TO. NOW, THAT I AM INDEPENDENTLY PRACTICING I HAVE QUICKLY LEARNED THE VALUE AND NECESSITY OF SETTING BOUNDARIES BOTH WITH THOSE I WORK AND MY PATIENTS.

WHETHER YOU ARE A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER LIKE MYSELF, A NURSE OR OTHER HEALTHCARE PROVIDER, A TEACHER, OR IN A DIFFERENT HELPING PROFESSION, YOU ARE LIKELY A HELPER BY NATURE. YOU WERE DRAWN TO YOUR CAREER BECAUSE YOU LIKE TO HELP AND SERVE. YOU PROBABLY SAY "YES" MORE THAN YOU SAY "NO" AND DO THINGS FOR OTHERS BEFORE DOING THINGS FOR YOURSELF. I GET IT, ITS NOT ONLY NECESSARY FOR YOUR CAREER, BUT ALSO MAKES YOU AMAZING AT WHAT YOU DO. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM WITH HELPERS LIKE OURSELVES, IS THAT WE ARE AT HIGH RISK FOR BURN OUT IF WE CONTINUOUSLY GIVE AND GIVE, WITHOUT EVER PAUSING AND ASKING OURSELVES WHAT WE REALLY NEED.

SO HERE ARE MY TOP 10 TIPS TO SETTING BOUNDARIES IN THE WORKPLACE. I PROMISE ONCE YOU START IMPLEMENTING THEM CONSISTENTLY, YOU WILL NOTICE A SHIFT IN YOUR WORK WELL BEING.

HERE'S TO TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST.

Jessy xo!



1. KNOW YOUR JOB REQUIREMENTS

- This may sound silly, but really, you need to know your job requirements through and through. If you are not knowledgeable about what is expected of you and what would consist of “going above and beyond” people are going to continuously ask you to do things that are not part of your job description.
- When you understand your job description, be able to vocalize that to other people. Sometimes people ask you to do things because they are unsure who to ask, but if you vocalize that that task is better suited for a different person, it will reduce the likelihood of being asked in the future.
- Particularly if you work in an interdisciplinary setting, offer to educate co-workers from other disciplines what your job responsibilities are, what is better suited for other members, and what is beyond your scope of practice.
- Recognize it is okay to go above and beyond if it is something you (1) have the skills to do and (2) have the time to do. However, when accepting a request or offering to help when it is beyond what you normally would do, make sure to word it in a way that doesn’t set up the expectation you will always do this.
 - “I have some extra time today and was wondering if there was anything I could help out with?”
 - “I am pretty busy today, but I likely will be able to get that done by the end of the week if that works for you?”
 - “I do not typically do that, but I do know how and things are pretty light today, so I’d be happy to help.”

2. KNOW WHAT IS OUTSIDE YOUR SCOPE OF SKILLS

- Just as it is important to know what your job description is, it is also important to know what areas are beyond your scope of practice and skills. By identifying these areas, it helps you set firm boundaries when in a situation that requires skills that you don’t have.
- Recognize it is okay to not have skills in everything. Everyone has different training, areas of strength, and areas of growth. The sooner you become okay with your growth areas, the sooner you will be able to set necessary boundaries.
- If someone asked you to do something outside of your scope of skills, explain to them that you do not have the knowledge/skillset to do that particular task and, if you know someone that does, direct them to that person/discipline.
 - “I appreciate you asking me; however, I actually do not actually have expertise in that area.”
 - “I do not have the answer for that; however, I believe [insert person here] may know. Would you like me to put you two in contact?”
 - “Thanks for asking; however, that task is actually more appropriate for [insert discipline here].”
 - “I understand you need someone to do this task; however, as I do not have training in this area I am unable to do it, as I fear doing so will negatively impact patient care [or whatever it would negatively impact].”

3. BE OKAY WITH SAYING "NO"

- One of the hardest things about boundary setting is saying “no”. Many of us go into helping professions because we are helpers by nature. Saying “no” is not our natural instinct, but by not saying “no” we tend to put others first and risk becoming overwhelmed and burnt out.
- When you are asked to do something, ask yourself the following questions. If you answer “no” to any of them, tell the person who asked you (even if it is yourself) “no”.
 - Do I know how to do this?
 - Do I have time to do this?
 - If I did this, would I be sacrificing another aspect of my job?
 - Do I want to do this?
- Saying “no” does not make you mean or a bad person, so it is time to let go of any beliefs you have about what saying “no” means about you. Some questions to help generate your thoughts and beliefs about saying “no”:
 - What do I fear will happen if I say no?
 - Do I have concerns about how people will perceive me if I say no? If so, where do those beliefs come from?
 - If I asked someone to do a favor and they said “no”, what would my reaction be?
 - How would saying “no” help me?
 - How would saying “no” harm me?

4. SETTING LIMITS WITH THE POPULATION YOU SERVE

- Not only is it important to set boundaries with those you work so that you can succeed at doing your job, it is also important to set boundaries with those you serve.
- If, for example, patients/clients/students are attempting to contact you after hours, remind them of your hours and emphasize that you will get back to them during the normal business day.
- Do not give out your personal email or cell phone number if that is not a company policy. If those you serve are allowed to have access to your email or cell number, set limits on responding to emails, calls, and texts, as well as the content that can be discussed on those platforms.
- If you are in a profession where you schedule appointments, make a no-show/cancellation policy and stick to it.
 - For example, in my practice if you no-show the first appointment you cannot reschedule for 6 months. Then, if you late cancel (less than 24 hours) or no-show 3 appointments you are discharged from my practice. I make patients sign a form including this policy so they are aware.

- Do not allow the population you serve disrespect you. Many of us in helping professions work with vulnerable populations and in high stress situations; however, this is not a reason to allow those we serve be disrespectful towards us.
 - “I understand this is stressful; however, I respectfully ask that you do not speak to me that way.”
 - “I do not appreciate how you just spoke to me. Let me step away for a couple minutes and we can continue this conversation when the situation has calmed down.”
 - “You may be allowed to speak to others that way; however, I do not tolerate that.”

5. SELF-CARE

- Burnout in helping professions is so high, so it is extremely important to engage in self-care, to reduce the risk of burnout.
- Schedule at least one thing to do for yourself weekly that you enjoy and will help you de-stress (e.g., a bubble bath with a glass of wine, an evening without electronics, a walk in the park).
- Have a morning and evening routine so you do not feel disheveled starting and ending your day.
- Stop using electronics an hour before bed to ensure you get a good night’s sleep.
- Drink enough water, move your body daily, and get enough sleep.
- Have a toolkit of coping skills that you can engage in at work when things become overwhelming or stressful.
 - I have done a number of mini trainings on coping skills that you can utilize anywhere in my **Grow Through What You Go Through** Facebook group.

6. HAVE A WORK/LIFE BALANCE

- A large part of self-care is having a good-work life balance. It is extremely easy to take our work home with us, emotionally or physically, which skews how much time we are actually spending focusing on work. A poor work/life balance will also increase our risk of burnout and negatively impact our relationships and social life.
- Minimize the amount of work you take home with you. Sometimes it is inevitable that you have to take paperwork home with you; however, if you are able to set aside time during the day to get it done or stay at work later to complete it, this minimizes work overflowing into your home life.
- Do not check your email or work phone at home, unless it is necessary for the job (e.g., you are a medical professional on call in the evening).
- Schedule social events during the week so that you are forced to leave work at a decent hour. For example, setting a dinner date with a friend at 5:30 PM so you know you have to be out the door by 5 PM.
- If you are finding yourself emotionally taking home work, engage in coping skills to shift your focus to other things, reach out for consultation on how to best handle the situation, and ask yourself why you are emotionally carrying this with you at home and what can you do to set more boundaries with regard to the situation.

7. USE YOUR VACATION DAYS

- Part of self-care and work-life balance is using your PTO, whether it is vacation days, sick days, or however your place of work operates. This is something I struggled with for years; saving up my days and never using them, just to get a payout. Money is nice, but taking a break is nicer.
- Determine what your PTO accrual looks like (do you accrue per pay period, get a set amount, are PTO and sick days different) and plan ahead. Determine how many holidays you will have to take, on average how many sick days you take, and if you have any upcoming events or holidays that you will need to take time off for. When you determine those, determine what you have left and use it!
- Plan a vacation, take a mental health day, take a day off to “adult” and go to doctors’ appointments, grocery shop when it is not crazy, or get that car work done that you have been putting off for months. You earned your PTO and it is important to use it to help with stress reduction (and to enjoy yourself).
- Remind yourself that your clients/patients/students will be okay without you. Just as it is important to set boundaries with your co-workers, it is important to set boundaries with those you serve. You deserve to take space and a break from your work in all capacities.
- When you use PTO, avoid checking your email, checking your work phone, or doing any other work (unless you take PTO to catch up on work).

8. KNOW YOUR WORTH

- You are in your profession for a reason, and I bet you are pretty amazing at it; therefore, it is important to know your worth so that others do not take advantage of you. When you know your worth and other people challenge you, you feel confident in your ability to respectfully stand your ground.
- Recognize your competence and skillset, as well as your areas of growth.
- Recognize the difference you make in the lives of the people you serve.
- Acknowledge the value you provide not only to the people you serve, but also your place of work as a whole system.
- If you are in an industry where you can set your own prices (e.g., private practice; entrepreneur), do not undercharge for your services.
- If you are in an industry where salary is negotiable, know what other people in your areas for similar jobs and experiences are getting paid and ensure you are not getting underpaid (and be okay with asking for more).
- Be aware of microaggressions in the work place and speak up when you see them.
 - If you have a doctorate but you are getting addressed as your first name rather than Dr. Last Name, speak up.
 - If there are differences in the way employees are treated due to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, etc. do not be afraid to point out the discrepancies.

9. KNOW WHO TO GO TO

- There are times that we will set boundaries, either with those we serve or co-workers and it doesn't seem like it is getting us anywhere; therefore, it is important to know who to go to if you feel you need additional support.
- Processing things with a co-worker who you trust is always a good first step, as this is someone who can potentially provide an alternative perspective and guide you in the right direction.
- Know who your hire ups are and the types of issues (and methods of communicating those issues) you would go to them for.
- When you do go to a hire up, make sure you do not go to complain, but rather, provide specific examples of the difficulties you are having, what you have tried, and what has not worked.
- Do not complain without a suggestion of a solution. We vent to friends, we problem solve in the work place. Make sure if you feel like your boundaries are not being respected and it requires assistance from someone higher up than you, that you also have suggestions on how to make the work environment better.

10. BE FLEXIBLE, WITHOUT BEING A DOOR MAT

- No matter what helping profession you are in, no two days will be the same; therefore, although it is essential you have firm boundaries, it is also essential you are able to be flexible. Sometimes colleagues are going to need more help than usual, sometimes the population you serve may require you to be more flexible, when these situations come up, ask yourself these questions:
 - What are the pros and cons of being more flexible with my boundaries?
 - If I bend my boundaries now, how will that impact things in the future?
 - Is this something I am willing to negotiate and, if not, how will I be firm in my boundaries?
 - How can I clearly communicate that I will do this now, but will not always necessarily be able to do it in the future?
- If you are asked to do something that you feel is taking advantage of you or your position, speak up and reach out. Allowing people to use you will cause a challenging work environment and lessen your enjoyment of work.
 - Go with your gut. If you feel you have to alter your boundaries but feel okay about it, it likely is not going to have a negative impact in the long term. However, if your gut is making you feel uneasy, listen to it and stay firm in your boundaries, or offer an alternate solution.

Next Steps & Additional Resources

JOIN MY FACEBOOK GROUP GROW THROUGH WHAT YOU GO THROUGH FOR MORE LOVE, SUPPORT, AND PRACTICAL TIPS YOU CAN APPLY IN YOUR EVERY DAY LIFE.

FOLLOW ME ON INSTAGRAM @JESSICALEIGHPHD FOR DAILY POSTS AND STORIES.

ENROLL IN MY MIND OVER MATTER COURSE. MY SIGNATURE COURSE FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS FOCUSED ON SHIFTING YOUR MINDSET AND IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES TO RECEIVE THE LOVE AND CARE YOU SO SELFLESSLY POUR INTO OTHERS, INTO YOURSELF.



I HOPE THIS GUIDE HELPED GIVE YOU SOME USEFUL TIPS THAT YOU CAN IMPLEMENT TODAY IN YOUR CAREER. FOR MORE BUSINESS AND 1:1 COACHING INFORMATION, VISIT ME AT [JESSICALEIGHPHD.WIXSITE.COM/MYSITE](https://jessicaleighphd.wixsite.com/mysite).



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