

102. Boundaries How to Make Setting them Less Hard

Vanessa 00:00

Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach, and mother of two.

Hi, sweet friends, we are back. And we are talking about boundaries today. Lessons with friends' boundaries are always going to be hard, they're always going to feel difficult. But I want to walk you through a process to help you make them a little bit less hard. I'm going to start by sharing a story with all of you, one of my coaching students, okay, his name is Dave.

Now, Dave is a physician leader and also a father of three kids and coaching his kid's soccer team. And for him, like many of us, ultimately, when he looked at his values, and the things that mattered to him, his family was number one. But he caught himself often making these decisions where he would prioritize work over his family. And he loved coaching his kid's soccer team, that's something that brought him a tremendous amount of joy just being present with his family. But it was hard for him because he also wanted to be excellent at his job and always be present at work. And so he was in this conundrum, where he felt uncomfortable setting boundaries. And so would try to do everything and be super present at work extra hard, but then he would be exhausted during his kid's soccer games, or he would miss his kid's soccer game. Or when he was there, he would just constantly be on his phone, texting and trying to solve work problems.

And eventually, because he thought boundaries should have been easy. And so he just didn't set them. He went down this spiral of always feeling exhausted, never feeling present, always feeling a little bit anxious. Like there's always something going on like he couldn't quiet his mind. And eventually, it led him down the road to burnout. So if any of this resonates with you know that you are not alone, we all experience difficulty when it comes to setting boundaries. Why? Because boundaries are hard boundaries are difficult to set. And you know, specifically for this one student, he thought that boundaries should be easy, that he should be stronger, that she should be able to do it all. And you notice these should statements, whenever you hear yourself saying that to yourself, that is a red flag that there is judgment somewhere coming up.

So if you catch yourself saying that you want to take a pause, and notice, I notice that I'm I noticed that I think I should be doing all this. Because just that right there is enough awareness to shift and change your actions. So he thought that it should be easier that he should be stronger, that he should be able to do everything, which really got in the way of him setting boundaries. So why are boundaries so

difficult to set? Boundaries are difficult because you have to say no to something. When you are setting a boundary, you're saying no to something, and saying no is uncomfortable. Because one we want to be helpful. We want to be able to go out and you know, make people proud of us. So if you are someone that has strived to strive for external validation, you are that high achiever, you love people saying congratulations or good job, or I'm proud of you that it's hard for you to set boundaries because you want to continue to receive that external validation.

So boundaries are challenging. They're hard because you have to say, no, they're hard because you're afraid that you might disappoint somebody, or you might make somebody mad at you. So for all those reasons, instead of setting the boundary, what do we try to do? What did Dave try to do? He tried to do it all, to say yes to everything and do it all. But ultimately, what does that lead you to? It leads you to exhaustion, because when you are unintentionally trying to do everything, then you are never intentionally present at the one thing that you're doing.

Okay, so for him specifically, what came up for him is he was afraid to say no to anything coming up at work. For example, somebody would call out sick at work, and instead of trying to get help for someone else to come in and cover that clinical shift, he would volunteer and go do it himself all the time. And he was afraid to not do that because he was afraid people would judge him they would think he wasn't a good enough medical director or he wasn't doing a good enough job. So just notice that for yourself when you think you need to keep saying yes to work things. Because you're afraid that if you say no, then somebody might judge you or they think you're not doing a good enough job or You might think you're not doing enough, and you might feel guilty. So the other thing that comes up often when we talk about boundaries is setting relationship boundaries.

For example, let's say that you want to set a boundary where you don't want your in-laws to come over unannounced anymore after 6 pm, you know, on the weekends, because you want to get your kids to sleep, for example. Now, you might be afraid to set that boundary, because you're concerned that they may get disappointed, or they may get mad at you. And so you hold off setting those boundaries. Because deep down you have this tendency to please other people. And I can tell you as a recovering people, pleaser, setting relationship boundaries was so hard for me, it was so hard for me because I thought I was responsible for making everybody else happy. So I had to say yes, all the time to things I didn't really want to do because I thought it was my job to make everyone else happy. And I'll just pause here and take a moment to say, it is never your job to make another adult happy, they are responsible for their happiness, and you are responsible for your own. So you got to care for yourself first. And make sure that you never take it in and make it personal if somebody else is upset, because you can never get into their brain and change what they're thinking and feeling you're not responsible for that. Alright, let's come back to boundaries. So again, boundaries are hard, because one, they're always going to feel uncomfortable.

So the sooner that you can just understand that boundaries will always feel uncomfortable, the sooner you will start being able to practice setting boundaries. And in the beginning, they will feel uncomfortable, but they get easier and easier as you go on. But they feel uncomfortable because you're getting asked to do something and you're going to have to say no, every time you say yes to one thing, you're saying no to something else. So you're going to have to say no to something. So I'm going to

walk you through a quick process for those of you that love processes. So to make it a little bit simpler for you when you're setting a boundary. Number one, when you're getting asked to do something, get super clear on the ask what is it that I'm being asked to do? And when you get clear on the ask, get super clear as to what you have to say no to. All right, what is it that I'm being asked to do? And if I say yes, what will I have to say no to?

Let's go back to Dave, for example, if he agreed to work that extra shift in the hospital, He's agreeing to work an extra shift in the hospital. But he does also mean that he's going to be really tired the next day, or he will, he will miss his kid's soccer game. So he's saying no to his kid's soccer game, or he's saying no to being fully present at his kid's soccer game. So once you get really clear on the Ask, and what you're saying no get clear on your values.

Okay, so what matters to me, you would immediately assume that it matters for me to be present for my kids. So I'm gonna say no to this work shift. But it's not always that cut and dry. It's not always that simple. For example, if you are trying to create this culture where you know, your work environment, where people want to pitch in, and they want to be present, and you want to lead by example because that's the value that you hold, then you will continue to show up and you will continue to be present. Because that's something that's the value that you hold, you want to lead by example. So saying yes to that shift, because you want to lead by example. That's you like that reason if that's your reason why it's a pretty good reason. Maybe that's okay, you just got to be clear on also knowing this will mean that I miss my kid's soccer game, and being really clear with what that means. And what can you do about that, like if you feel sad, or disappointed, or you're afraid your kids are going to feel sad or disappointed?

How can you manage that ahead of time, talk to your kids, and let them know, you'll make sure you make it to the next one? And make it really clear that this isn't something you're going to do all the time, you're not going to be the solution, for example, to covering all the holes on the schedule. This is something that you're doing so that everyone can see that this is everybody's job we all pitch in. And in the future, you'll make sure that you're well rested, that you're present for your kid's games, you know, you'll make it to their after party if they have some sort of after-party, and you'll be there with them. And you'll make sure you're not on your phone, you know answering or answering text messages or anything from work. Alright, so get clear on the ask. Get clear on what you're saying no to understand your values or the reasons behind what you want to say yes, to or what you want to say no to. And once you get super clear on your ask, then get really comfortable in feeling that discomfort because it's going to be uncomfortable either way. And this is the last step. Once you make your decision, you are fully committed to your decision.

Once you decide yes, I'm all in I'm gonna work that shifts, then you are fully committed to working that shift and you create peace with that decision. Let go of the guilt of The shame of everything else. And the way you let go is you know that you made this decision intentionally. You were thoughtful, you had integrity behind it. So there's nothing wrong, you know because what's going to happen is guilt is going to try to see Ben, shame me try to see Ben. But you've got to nip that in the bud and remind yourself, I'm not doing anything wrong, I made this decision out of integrity, and you have your back, you tell yourself, there's, there's no way out, I'm not going to be mean to myself here. You're not going to let

yourself talk nasty to yourself and say things like, you should be doing this. Instead, you're a bad father, you're bad at this, you just fully commit to your decision, and you go all in all the way.

Okay. And then you celebrate, you celebrate the fact that you made a decision that you were super clear, and you were able to move forward. And that, my friends, is how you get super comfortable. setting boundaries, even when they are hard. You get comfortable. Again, I'm going to review the steps in a second, you get comfortable again, because you made a decision based on your values that was aligned with your integrity. Alright, so let's walk through the steps again. So boundaries will always be hard because you're saying no to something. So how do you do them? One, Get clear on the ask and get clear on what you have to say no to. Once you do that, get really clear on why would I say yes to this. Why would I say no to that? And make sure you're aligning your decisions based on your value, your Northstar your integrity.

And if you are learning how to reconnect to your own, you know, intuition alignment, go back to Episode 101, where I talk all about intuition. So once you get super clear on that on your values, then you make your decision. And you are fully committed. As soon as you make your decision. You are all in all the way. Don't leave yourself a backdoor to like guilt, see Ben or shame See, Ben, just be in all the way. And remember, it's going to be uncomfortable either way, whether you had said yes to coaching your kid's team that weekend, instead of working the shift, you're going to feel uncomfortable because you weren't there and present at work. And if you say yes to working in the hospital, you're going to feel uncomfortable because you weren't at your kid's game. So no one's going to feel uncomfortable either way. So once you make the decision, you go all in. And you do leave no backdoor open for guilt, For shame, or for anything else to seep in. And that's how you make decisions based on your alignment. And makes it just slightly easier to set boundaries, because boundaries will be hard. But following this process will make it just a little bit easier.

Okay, so we're friends go out a set those boundaries that might feel uncomfortable, but those boundaries are going to be the key to your longevity, they're going to be the key to your peace, to your happiness to your equanimity. They're going to be the Pete the key to you being able to be present wherever you are, when you're at work fully present and focused. When you're at home fully present and focused. Giving to your family, you know, giving them the presence, the happiness, the joy. And when you're at work, giving them that focus that productivity, giving them that hard work so that you're always working at 100% of your capacity, without feeling guilty that you're not doing enough. Because that's just a story. Whenever you think you're not doing enough, that is just a story. And it's getting in the way of your happiness. And remember, the number one gift you can ever give anybody, the most important gift is your happiness.

Which is why boundaries are so important. Because think about how you show up and how you who you are and how you can give of yourself. When you're happy when you're with your family. Who is that person? That person is giving their present, they laugh, they're joyful. And what happens when you show up exhausted or frustrated or not present? You're snappy, you're short, you're unfocused, you're always looking at your phone. So think about who is it that you want to be and let that fuel you when it comes to setting boundaries. All right, so we're friends have an amazing week. I will see you next week.

Hey, sweet friends. If you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us on the journey. It's my all-inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at <https://www.vanessacalderonmd.com/>. I'll see you there.