



Setting Boundaries, Communication Strategies, and Managing Guilt

Presentation Handouts

Outline

- Identify a problem
- Boundaries
- Communicating Boundaries
- Communication Style
- Practice
- Managing Guilt
- Helpful Hints
- Additional Resources

Take-aways

- Understand boundaries
- Learn about assertive communication
- Learn strategies for setting boundaries
- Manage guilt

Think of one problem someone is asking you to do that you don't want to:

Examples: Take the lead on a work project; Be the driver to hockey practice; Meet a certain friend for dinner

Check Others' Expectations & Assumptions

- Are you assuming you're needed to do this?
- Are you assuming there will be negative consequences if you say no?
- Do you have a need to be in control of this?
- Can you allow someone else to do this?
- Can you accept if someone else does this, it may not be how you would do it?

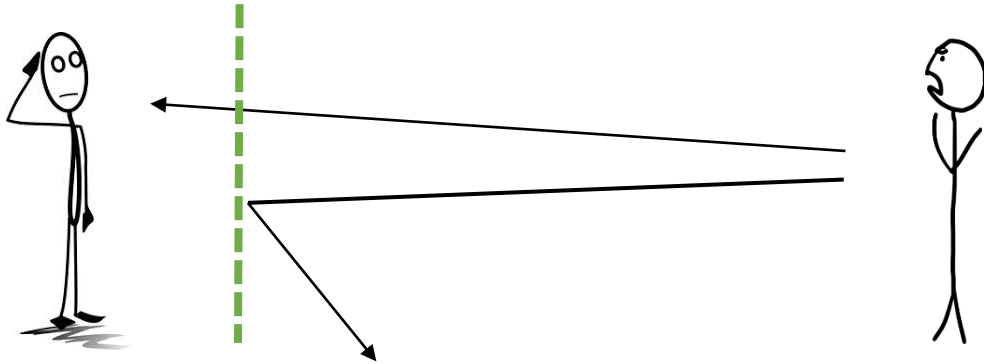
Reflect

- Are you generally available?
- Is this relationship/task important to you?
- What are your priorities? (By saying no, what are you making room for?)
- Are you okay with consequences of not doing this?

State Problem: _____

Boundaries

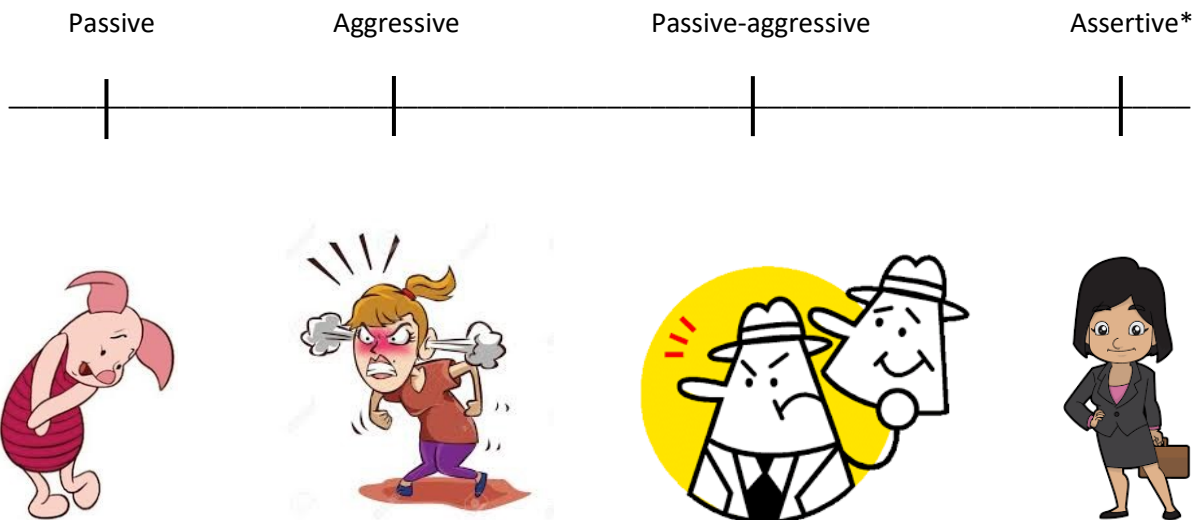
Setting a limit; The right to say “yes” or “no” to certain things; How we control what goes in and out of our lives.



Example: In a staff meeting, your boss asks for volunteers to join a new task force. You have already volunteered for numerous extra projects that many of your co-workers haven't. You have a lot going on at home and you really can't handle any more extra responsibilities at work without cutting back more on your family time or sleep. You typically are someone who will volunteer to help out and so you feel mounting pressure to agree to join the task force, and most people in the room probably assume you will. An example of setting a boundary is not volunteering for it this time.

Communicating Boundaries

Styles:



*Assertive:

- Make eye contact
- Straight posture
- Smile
- Appropriate space between self and other person
- Arms typically relaxed by one's side
- State opinion without insulting other person

Communication Style: “Sandwich approach”

- 1) (One positive): Remind the person that you value them/the relationship
- 2) (One negative): **Briefly** provide the reason you are denying the request
- 3) (One positive): Remind the person of the next time you will see them/grant a request

Example #1: Your sister and brother-in-law ask you over for dinner on the only Saturday night that you don't have a commitment that month. You have seen a lot of your extended family lately. You and your partner were looking forward to spending quality time together in that evening as a way of reconnecting.

You talk with your partner and you both share that you've been looking forward to spending time together that evening.

You tell your sister: “We love spending time with you guys and we had so much fun with you lately [Reminding them you value them]. This weekend isn't good for us, we already have a commitment, and we're sorry, but we won't be able to make it [Brief reason for denying the request]. But Angela's birthday is in two weeks, and we are looking forward to seeing you then” [Reminding them the next time you will see them].

Example #2: You have been working evenings to get an extra work project for a new hospital contract done and your supervisor comes into your office and tells you about another project and she thinks it would be great if you could be involved. You are already struggling to get your typical work load done and you know that with another project, you will have to work weekends. You know your child has a basketball tournament this weekend, and you've promised him that you would watch the games.

You tell your supervisor: “I'm flattered you want my expertise on this project and I'd love to be involved. I would be able to work on it if I can put the hospital project on hold until this new one's done. I have commitments on the weekends and that would be the only time I could work on another project. I've enjoyed growing my skills with these extra projects, so I could do it as long as it's okay to put the other one on hold. Is that possible?”

Try the Skills Yourself:

Context (work, home, other):

Person (co-worker, friend, partner, extended family):

Problem:

How you will communicate:

1. Remind the person that you value them/the relationship:

2. **Briefly** provide the reason you are denying the request:

3. Remind the person of the next time you will see them/grant a request:

Managing Guilt

Reflect: Where does my guilt come from?

Remember: Why am I saying no?

I'm tired	I'm sick	I need to exercise	I need time for other obligations
I'm nurturing a relationship		I'm nurturing my career	I need to laugh
I'm irritable	Other: _____	Other: _____	

Remember: What kind of person am I?

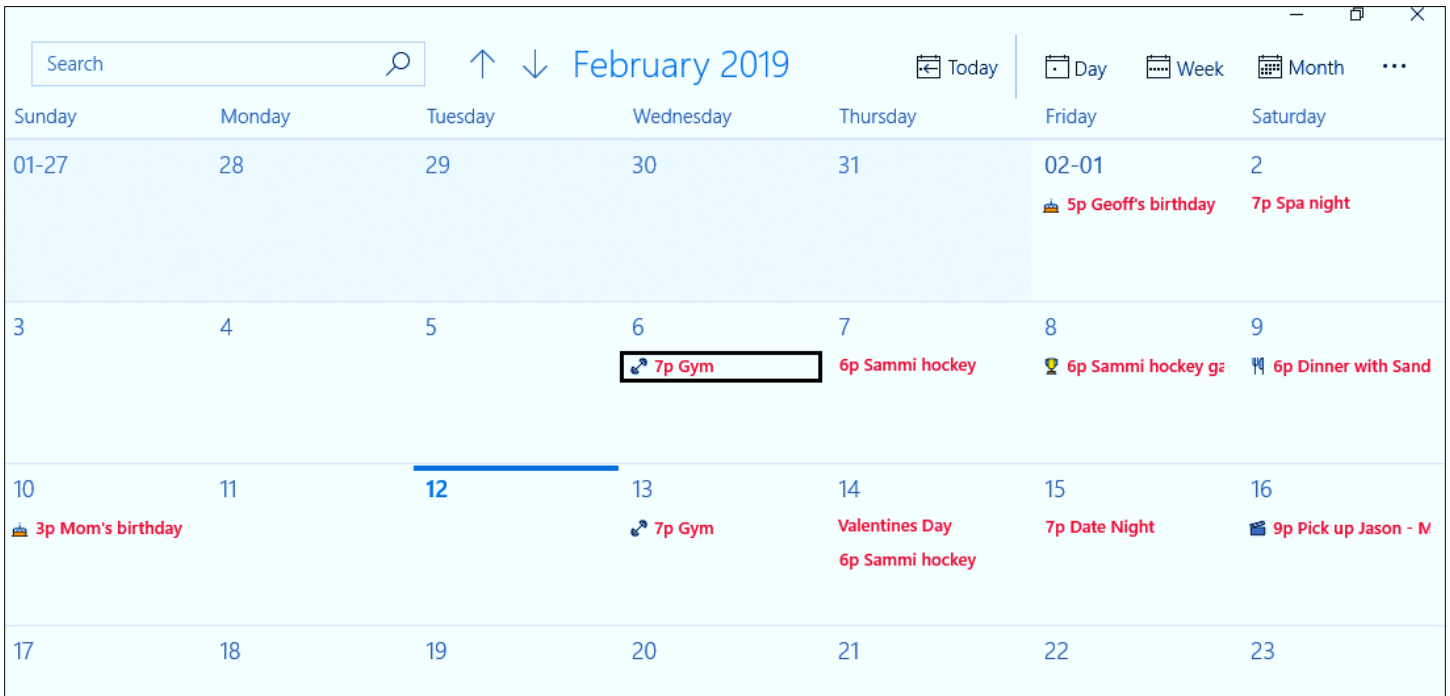
I'm giving	I'm kind	I'm funny	I love my career	I love my friends
I'm a hard worker	I'm responsible	I'm happy	I'm financially smart	
I'm a good person	I love my family	Other: _____	Other: _____	

Reflect:

- Learn to say yes when you can
- Will the person understand?
- Is this important to me?

Helpful hints

- Tell person you will get back to them (i.e., “I need to check the time of Sammi’s hockey game.”)
- State a general rule you have to make it less personal (i.e., “I have a policy of not lending more than \$100,” “I have a policy of having a monthly movie night with my son.”)
- Practice: Try with small things first
- Put obligations to yourself in your calendar:



Additional Resources:

- “How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty” (2000) By Connie Hatch and Patti Brietman
- “Where to Draw the Line” (2000) By Anne Katherine
- “Boundaries: Where you End and I Begin” (1994) By Anne Katherine
- “Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No To Take Control of Your Life” (2017)
By Henry Cloud and John Townsend
- See a psychologist for practice or if there are deeper issues going on



Erin Buhr, R. Psych.
(780) 424-0123
Toll-free 1-888-424-0126
buhr@glenora.net
www.glenora.net

