

# Boundaries Without Guilt

## A MINI WORKBOOK

### WHAT ARE BOUNDARIES?

Boundaries are the limits we set to protect our time, energy, emotions, and well-being. They help us stay connected to ourselves while remaining in relationship with others.

Boundaries are not punishments.

They are not walls.

They are not a rejection of others.

Boundaries are a form of **self-respect and care**.

## BOUNDARY REFLECTION EXERCISE

Where do I feel resentful or drained?

What do I say yes to that I wish I didn't?

What am I afraid would happen if I said no?

## Why Boundaries Can Feel So Hard

Many people were taught:

- Saying no is selfish or leads to conflict or rejection
- Keeping peace matters more than comfort
- Being "easygoing" keeps relationships intact
- Other people's needs come first and matter more than their own
- Rest or space must be earned

Boundaries often trigger guilt. **Not** because they're wrong, but because they're new.

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### YOUR EARLY BOUNDARY MESSAGES

Growing up, how were needs expressed in my family? Were they encouraged, ignored, minimized or punished?

What happened when I said no as a child or teen?

What messages did I learn about being "selfish" or "too much"?

#### SIGNS A BOUNDARY MAY BE MISSING

Boundaries often show up as feelings before thoughts. You may notice:

- Resentment
- Exhaustion
- Anxiety before interactions
- Guilt after saying yes
- A sense of being taken for granted

These feelings are information.

### Reframing Guilt

Guilt does not always mean you are doing something wrong. Sometimes it means you are doing something new.

Guilt often shows up when:

- You stop over-functioning
- You disrupt old roles
- You choose yourself

**Guilt is a feeling—not a rule**

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### PRACTICING BOUNDARIES WITH COMPASSION

You do not need long explanations to set a boundary.

Try:

- "That doesn't work for me right now."
- "I'm not able to commit to that."
- "I need some time to think about it."
- "I'm taking space to rest."

Clear is kind.

#### AFTER- BOUNDARY CARE

Setting boundaries can feel activating.

Support yourself afterward by:

- Taking a few slow breaths
- Placing a hand on your chest
- Reminding yourself why the boundary matters

**Try this affirmation:**

"I am allowed to protect my energy."

### Reflection: Values-Based Boundaries

Boundaries are easier to hold when they align with your values.

Answer the following:

- What value does this boundary protect? (e.g., rest, honesty, safety)
- How might my life feel if I honored this boundary consistently?

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### WHEN BOUNDARIES FEEL IMPOSSIBLE

If boundaries feel overwhelming, it may be because:

- Your nervous system associates them with danger
- You were rewarded for over-giving
- You fear abandonment or conflict

This doesn't mean you're incapable. It means you may need support.

## EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES ASSESSMENT

(Check all that Apply)

- ☐ I feel responsible for other people's emotions
- ☐ I avoid sharing how I really feel to keep the peace
- ☐ I feel guilty when I express my needs
- ☐ I feel drained after certain conversations
- ☐ I'm often the emotional support for others but struggle to receive it

If you checked any of these, emotional boundaries may need attention.

## TIME & ENERGY BOUNDARIES ASSESSMENT

(Check all that Apply)

- ☐ I overcommit even when I'm exhausted
- ☐ I struggle to say no to requests
- ☐ I feel resentful about how my time is used
- ☐ I feel like there's never enough time to rest
- ☐ I cancel plans with myself before canceling on others

If you checked any of these, it can signal that your time and energy may need more protection..

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### COMMUNICATION BOUNDARIES ASSESSMENT

(Check all that Apply)

- ☐ I feel pressured to respond immediately to messages
- ☐ I avoid difficult conversations
- ☐ I say "it's fine" when it isn't
- ☐ I feel misunderstood but don't speak up
- ☐ I rehearse conversations long after they happen

If you checked any of these, communication boundaries may need attention to support clarity and emotional safety.

### PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES ASSESSMENT

(Check all that Apply)

- ☐ I feel uncomfortable with certain types of touch
- ☐ I don't always speak up when my physical space is crossed
- ☐ I feel obligated to be physically available when I'm not
- ☐ I ignore body signals like fatigue or tension
- ☐ I feel disconnected from my body's needs

If you checked any of these, it can signal that you may need to tune into your body's signals to better understand your physical boundaries.

**NEXT SMALL  
STEP**

Choose one:

- Practice saying no without explaining
- Delay a response to check in with yourself
- Limit time in draining situations
- Ask for what you need
- Seek support to practice boundaries safely