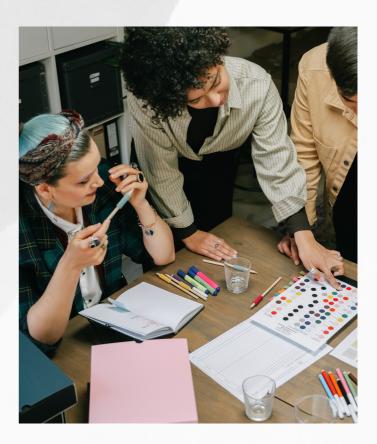# SELF-CARE: SETTING BOUNDARIES AT WORK

Like exercise, meditation, or budgeting, most of us know that having boundaries around our work and our home lives is something we should probably do. Even so, finding the time to change unhealthy behaviors, or learn and build new habits is easier said than done.

In a world as fast-paced as ours, it's tempting to continuously look for the next shortcut or productivity tool to keep pace with the competition — but these "hacks" don't usually work long term. In fact, Americans are sleeping less, stress and anxiety has gone up, and we are more caffeinated and less physically active than ever before.

Boundaries are a Self-Care Solution

When we define what we need to feel secure and healthy, and create tools to protect those parts of ourselves we are setting boundaries. Boundaries do wonders for our well-being at work and at home — which, in turn, allows us to bring our best selves to both places.

Along with helping you preserve your job satisfaction defining your limits also offers the following benefits:

- Raises productivity
- Lowers work-related stress
- Maintains a reasonable workload
- Reduces the risk of burnout
- Sets an example for others

What to Do

Setting boundaries at work involves establishing personal goals and limits that you share with your colleagues to keep healthy practices while working. If you're unsure what boundaries to set, you may start with differentiating types of boundaries from what could be unreasonable requests. It's extra work and it might feel unnatural at first, but preemptively protecting your mental health is important and worth the effort.

Setting Physical boundaries

Physical boundaries relate to your workspace and your body. These rules establish your expectations for how people interact with you, and they often relate to space and touch. Examples of physical boundaries include:

- Offering handshakes rather than hugs
- Have a "tell" to show coworkers you are busy or focused (wearing headphones, a cubicle sign, or closed door)
- Going for a solo break during lunch (maybe with your favorite podcast)
- Take your sick days and your mental health days
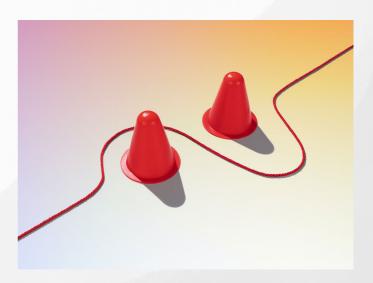
Setting Emotional boundaries

Emotional boundaries help you maintain inner balance and peace at work. They help you separate your feelings from how someone else may feel without negating the need for empathy. Examples of emotional boundaries include:

- Avoiding engaging in someone's bad mood or negative attitude
- Delegating work when necessary
- Talking to your manager about how you prefer to receive feedback

Setting Mental boundaries

Mental boundaries support your energy and help you focus when working. They typically relate to your opinions, thoughts, and values at work. Examples of mental boundaries include:

- Establishing the set hours you work – and stick to them
- Decline superfluous meetings and request time back on your calendar
- Advising management on strategies for more efficient meetings
- Choosing not to engage in gossip with colleagues at work
- Setting messages on Teams or Outlook to alert others that you're focusing

Boundaries are good for you and the people you work with. When you set clear boundaries and stick to them consistently, it can help ease any difficult or awkward work situations.

To set professional boundaries with your coworkers, you must clearly communicate and start small. Try the helpful resources below to learn more:

- A Guide to Setting Better Boundaries
- Healthy Boundaries at Work