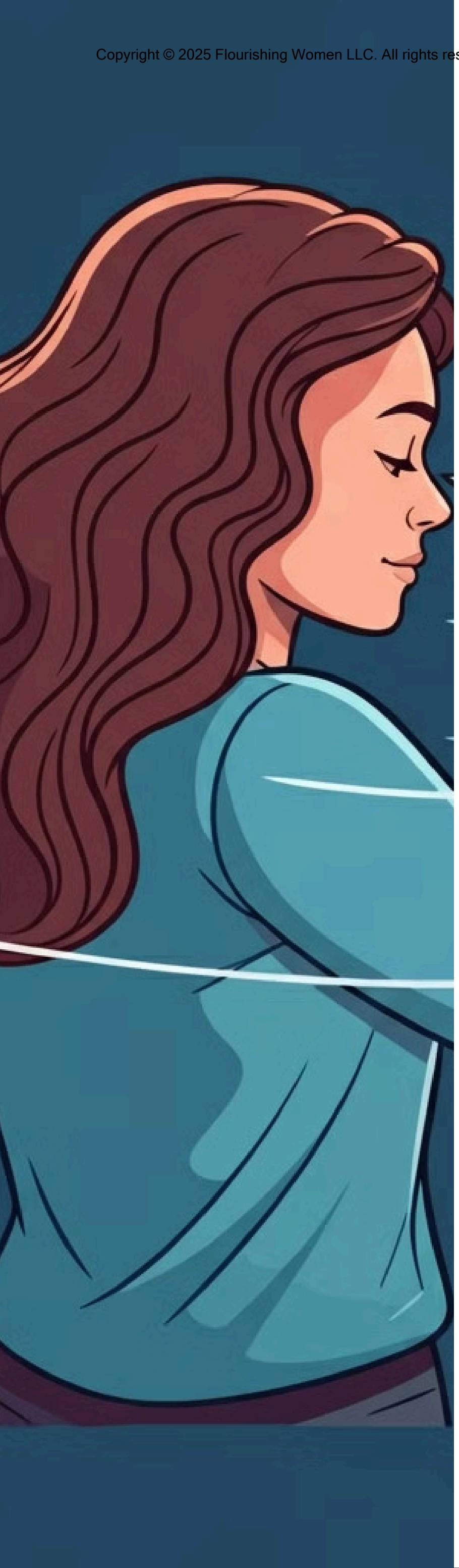
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What are Boundaries?

- Boundaries are the unseen lines that help us decide what we're okay with and how we expect others to act toward us.
- They can be about our personal space, our feelings, our energy, our thoughts, and our stuff.
- Boundaries can help us stay mentally healthy by shielding us from stress and helping us to respect our individual rights. They can also help us feel safe physically.



by Kristen McClure

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Types of Boundaries

- Physical Boundaries are related to personal space and touch.
- Emotional Boundaries protect your feelings and stop you from shouldering others' emotional burdens.
- Energetic Boundaries are about protecting your energy from others. If you often feel drained or overwhelmed by others or the vibes of a place, setting an energetic boundary can help.
- Mental Boundaries relate to your thoughts, values, and opinions and your right to have them.
- Material Boundaries are about your personal belongings and money. Time Boundaries are about how you spend your time.
- Body Boundaries are about your comfort level and consent concerning touch, intimacy, and sexual activities.
- Digital Boundaries are about your online interactions, like privacy settings, the time spent online, and response times to messages.

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Why are Boundaries Hard?

Neurodivergent women aren't taught it's okay to assert boundaries.

Societal familial and cultural influences can further complicate boundary setting.

Power and Privilege in Boundary Setting

Some people with more privilege find it easier to set boundaries and have them respected. Confidence and trust are essential for setting boundaries, as is understanding how societal norms impact our ability to assert them.

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The Two Kinds of Boundaries



Internal Boundaries

Limits you set with yourself, often focusing on personal limits you want to manage or control.



External Boundaries

Limits you set with others to define acceptable interactions and behaviors.

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Just Use Your Willpower

1

Willpower Doesn't Always Work

Concepts like motivation, willpower, and focus might not work the same way for neurodivergent people and can lead to feelings of shame.

2

Tailored Strategies

You need strategies designed for your specific needs. We'll share some ideas here and delve deeper in future lessons.

3

Be Kind to Yourself

Setting personal boundaries takes time and practice. Be patient with yourself as you discover what works, aligning your boundaries with your values and goals.

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Types of Internal (Self) Boundaries

1. Setting a consistent bedtime.
2. Limiting work hours to maintain work-life balance.
3. Managing social media usage.
4. Choosing eating habits that feel healthy for you.
5. Scheduling regular exercise.
6. Carving out downtime for relaxation and hobbies.

Self-boundaries are essentially a form of self-care, which is why they can feel so difficult—true self-care isn’t easy!

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Knowing When You Need Boundaries

Physical Boundaries	Pay attention to your comfort level when people are in your personal space or touching you. If you feel uneasy or unsafe, it's a sign to set or reinforce a boundary.
Emotional Boundaries	If you find yourself overly invested in someone else's problems or feel like your emotions are not respected, it may be time to establish an emotional boundary.
Energetic Boundaries	If you often feel drained or overwhelmed by others, or the vibes of a place, you might need to establish energetic boundaries to protect your energy.
Mental Boundaries	If you find your opinions are consistently dismissed or belittled, it's a sign that your mental boundaries need reinforcement.
Material Boundaries	If people often borrow your belongings without asking or assume you'll always cover the bill, you may need to clarify your material boundaries.
Time Boundaries	Feeling consistently over-committed or like your time isn't respected indicates the need for clearer time boundaries.
Body Boundaries	Pay attention to your comfort level regarding touch, intimacy, and sexual activities. If you ever feel pressured or uncomfortable, it's crucial to establish clear body boundaries.
Digital Boundaries	If you find your time online overwhelming or invasive, it could indicate the need for digital boundaries concerning privacy settings, time spent online, and response times to messages.

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Using Your Emotional Cues as Boundary Signals

Often, your emotions can signal the need to set a boundary. Recognizing these cues is crucial for protecting your well-being. Here are some emotional indicators:

1 Stress and Overwhelm

Frequent feelings of stress or being overwhelmed can indicate that you're overextending yourself, suggesting a need for better boundaries.

2 Emotional Exhaustion

Feeling drained by others' emotions or problems suggests the need for stronger emotional boundaries.

3 Resentment and Anger

These emotions often arise when boundaries are violated, indicating a need for clearer or more assertive boundary setting.

4 Frustration

Frequent frustration due to infringements on your time, space, or resources suggests that boundaries need strengthening.

5 Fatigue

Persistent fatigue might indicate neglecting self-care to meet others' expectations, highlighting the need for stronger self-care boundaries.

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Reflections:

What boundaries would you set?

If setting boundaries felt effortless, what changes would you make to address the issues you're facing?

Write your thoughts here:

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Reflections:

Internal or external?

Consider whether these boundaries would primarily be with yourself (internal) or with others (external).

Write your thoughts here:

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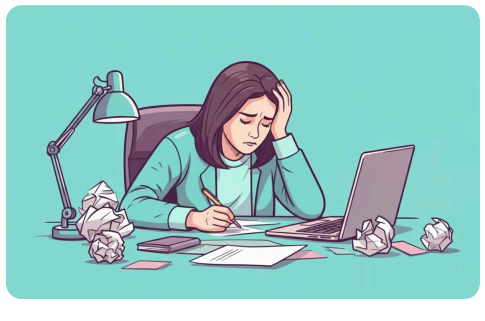
Reflections:

Do any of these signs resonate with you?

Take a moment to reflect on whether you've experienced any of the emotional cues mentioned earlier.

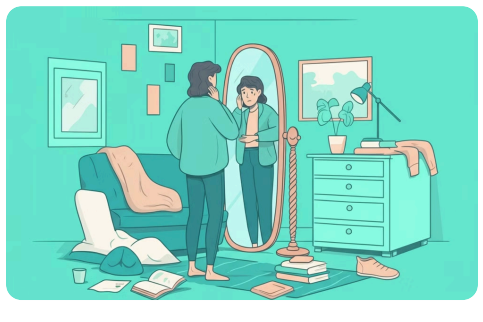
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Ineffective Ways to Set Self Boundaries



Shame or Guilt

These emotions often backfire, leading to overwhelm, avoidance, procrastination, and discouragement.



Criticism and Self-Judgment

Beating yourself up only triggers shame and blocks progress.



Willpower

Willpower is inconsistent and unreliable, whether you’re neurotypical or neurodivergent.



Motivation

Like willpower, motivation is unpredictable and unsustainable for managing boundaries.



To-Do Lists, Reminders, and Planners

While helpful for some tasks, these tools often fall short for managing boundaries, especially for those with ADHD.



Unrealistic Expectations

Setting overly strict or ambitious boundaries can feel overwhelming, setting you up for failure.

The key is to approach boundaries in a way that’s compassionate, flexible, and tailored to your needs.

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SELF BOUNDARIES CHECKLIST

1 ☐ Work-Life Balance

Are you working too much and neglecting other important areas of your life?

2 ☐ Social Media Usage

Is excessive social media making you feel bad or taking up too much of your time?

3 ☐ Bedtime

Do you struggle with maintaining a consistent bedtime routine?

4 ☐ Healthy Eating Habits

Are you nourishing your body with regular, healthy meals?

5 ☐ Movement

Are you incorporating enough movement and physical activity into your day?

6 ☐ Relaxation

Are you making enough time for relaxation, hobbies, and downtime?

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WHAT ISN'T WORKING

Reflect on the strategies you've tried to set personal boundaries. Which of these haven't worked for you?

- [ ] Discipline

  Trying to be more disciplined

- [ ] Shame & Guilt

  Shaming and guilting myself

- [ ] Motivation

  Trying to just get motivated

- [ ] Self-Criticism

  Criticizing myself

- [ ] Willpower

  Trying to have willpower



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Setting Personal Boundaries: Helpful Tips

1

Be Kind to Yourself

It's okay if strict routines don't work. Focus on what feels good.

2

Write Things Down

Use notes or reminders to remember what's important and stick to your boundaries.

3

Focus on Your Values

Make sure your boundaries reflect what truly matters to you. This makes them easier to keep.

4

Be Flexible

Life changes, so should your boundaries. Don't be afraid to adjust them.

5

Don't Be Perfect

Mistakes happen. Learn from them and move on.

6

Take Care of Yourself

Look after your mind and body. This could mean setting boundaries around personal time. Find self-care routines that work for *you*. It doesn't matter what others do.

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WORKSHEET TRYING OUT NEW SKILLS

SETTING A NEW SELF CARE /INTERNAL BOUNDARY

MY G OAL THIS WEEK:

NEW STRATEGIES TO TRY

- [ ] REMINDING MYSELF I DESERVE SELF CARE
- [ ] PRACTICING-SELFCOMPASSION
- [ ] CONNECTING WITH THE VALUE BEHIND THE THING I’M DOING
- [ ] EXTERNALIZE WITH REMINDERS OR POST ITS



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WORKSHEET TRYING OUT NEW SKILLS

What boundary might I work on with myself?
Commit to winding down earlier in the evening to set the stage for sleep.

MY GOAL THIS WEEK:

Set a bedtime that's 15 minutes earlier (e.g., 11:45 PM instead of 12:00 AM).

NEW STRATEGIES TO TRY

- [x] ~~REMINDING MYSELF I DESERVE SELF CARE~~
- [x] ~~PRACTICING SELF-COMPASSION~~
- [x] ~~CONNECTING WITH THE VALUE BEHIND THE THING I'M DOING~~
- [x] ~~EXTERNALIZE WITH REMINDERS OR POST ITS~~

New strategies to try:

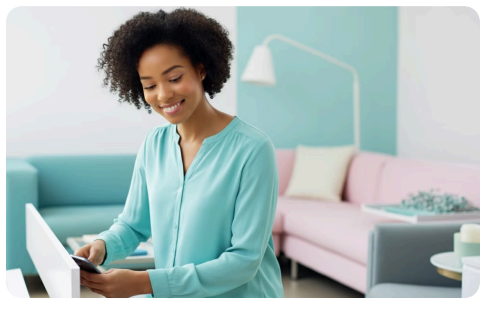
- Practicing self-compassion by reminding myself that I deserve rest.
- Setting an alarm or reminder 30 minutes before bedtime to start my wind-down routine.
- Using self-talk to reinforce why this goal matters.
- Externalizing: Write a note or affirmation by my bed that says, "Rest is self-care. You deserve this."
- **Practicing self-compassion:**
  - Use self-soothing touch, like putting a hand on my heart and saying kind words to myself.
- **Connecting with the value behind this goal:**
  Better sleep helps me have the energy to be present for the things and people I care about, including myself.



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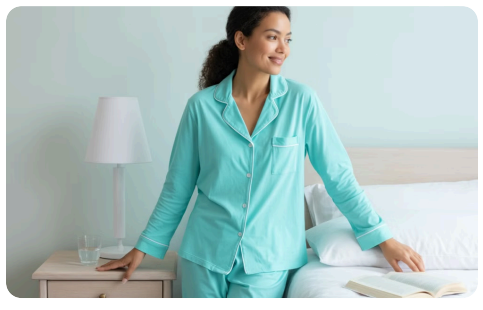
Strategy: Make the Easy Hard and the Hard Easy

This phrase encapsulates a crucial strategy in setting effective boundaries with yourself. The core idea is to introduce "friction" to discourage unhelpful behaviors and reduce friction to encourage helpful ones.



Limiting Technology Use

- **Make the Easy Hard:** Remove social media apps from your phone or log out after each use. Turn off notifications or use website blockers during work hours.
- **Make the Hard Easy:** Designate specific times for checking social media and set timers. Engage in alternative activities you enjoy, like reading or spending time outdoors.



Improving Sleep Habits

- **Make the Easy Hard:** Charge your phone outside the bedroom to avoid late-night scrolling. Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bed.
- **Make the Hard Easy:** Prepare for bed 30 minutes earlier. Dim the lights and listen to calming music. Practice a relaxing bedtime routine, like taking a warm bath or reading.



Manage Distractions

Make the Easy Hard: Put your phone in another room, a drawer, or somewhere out of reach while working. This makes it harder to check it without thinking.

Make the Hard Easy: Have a workspace just for work, without unrelated things. This makes focusing easier.



Avoid Multitasking

Make the Easy Hard: Use single-app or full-screen mode on your computer. This stops you from switching between tabs.

Make the Hard Easy: Use a notepad or planner for tasks, not digital tools. This makes it easier to focus on one thing.

This strategy works for other goals too. By making distractions harder to reach and focus easier, you build helpful internal boundaries.

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External Boundaries

Setting External Boundaries Looks Like.....

Physical Boundaries

Leave spaces where you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, such as exiting a crowded room or party.

Emotional Boundaries

Disengage from relationships or conversations that cause emotional turmoil.

Energetic Boundaries

Redirect energy away from draining individuals or activities towards ones that enrich and fulfill you.

Mental Boundaries

Avoid toxic environments or situations that consistently undermine your values and beliefs.

Material & Financial Boundaries

Refrain from lending belongings or money, representing a form of limiting contact in financial contexts.

Time Boundaries

Step back from commitments that demand too much of your time and energy.

Body Boundaries

Distance yourself from situations or people that make you uncomfortable or unsafe through physical removal or ending relationships.

Professional Boundaries

Decline additional tasks or choose to leave a job that consistently violates your boundaries.

Communication Boundaries

End conversations or avoid arguments to protect your mental and emotional space.

By implementing these actions, you can effectively set and maintain boundaries that prioritize your well-being. Remember that the need for communication may arise depending on the relationship context and your sense of safety.

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06

Emotions that Indicate You Need a Boundary



Resentment and Anger



Frustration



Fatigue or Exhaustion



Anxiety



Stress or overwhlem

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Emotions Indicating a Need for Boundaries

Often, your emotions might indicate you need to set a boundary. Here are some emotions that might be a sign that you need to set internal or external boundaries.

1 Stress and Overwhelm

Frequent feelings of stress or being overwhelmed can indicate that you're overextending yourself to accommodate others' needs, suggesting a need for better boundaries.

2 Emotional Exhaustion

If you often find yourself drained by others' emotions or problems, setting emotional boundaries can help conserve your emotional energy.

3 Resentment and Anger

These feelings often surface when you perceive your boundaries are being violated, indicating the need for more straightforward or assertive boundary setting.

4 Frustration

If you often feel frustrated due to infringements on your time, space, or resources, this could signal that your boundaries need strengthening.

5 Fatigue

Persistent fatigue might suggest you're neglecting your own rest and self-care to meet others' expectations, hinting at a need for self-care boundaries.



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Needs and Boundaries

For neurodivergent individuals, especially those with alexithymia often associated with ADHD and autism, identifying personal needs can serve as essential boundary indicators. Recognizing these core needs is vital for physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Understanding and articulating unmet or violated needs is deeply therapeutic . This process, which may include setting boundaries, can offer valuable insights and may assist in expressing concerns effectively, resulting in a sense of empowerment. Just knowing your needs is empowering!

You can see some needs on the next pages.



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Understanding Needs: The Foundation for Healthy Boundaries

1

✔️ Joy: The need for fun, laughter, celebration, play, and experiencing joy.

2

✔️ Peace: The need for inner calm, tranquility, emotional stability, and harmony.

3

✔️ Meaning: The need for purpose, growth, challenge, contribution , creativity, and making a difference.

4

✔️Honesty: The need for truth, authenticity, integrity, and trust in relationships.

5

✔️ Autonomy: The need for independence, choice, freedom, and personal control.

6

✔️ Connection: The need for love, acceptance, belonging, empathy, friendship, intimacy, and community.

7

✔️ Safety: The need for security, protection, predictability, and freedom from harm or fear.

8

✔️ Physical Well-being: This includes the need for food, water, rest, exercise, shelter, and sexual expression.

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Knowing Your Needs Helps Communication

In Nonviolent Communication (NVC), expressing and understanding needs is a core principle. By clearly and directly expressing our needs to others, and empathizing with the needs of others, we can develop stronger boundaries and foster healthier relationships.

This is discussed more in the communication module of the course, support group and workbook.

Understanding needs is one of the the building blocks of effective communication.

Reflection

How well do you understand your needs?

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What Do You Need?

When you habitually prioritize the needs of others while neglecting your own, it can become challenging to ask yourself the vital question: *"What do I need?"* Practicing this question regularly is an essential step toward self-care and self-connection.

Masking, Boundaries, and Needs

Masking—suppressing or camouflaging your authentic self—often leads to a disconnection from your true identity and a compromise of personal boundaries. Over time, this can make it even harder to identify or prioritize your own needs.

Reconnecting with your authentic self starts with recognizing and honoring your needs. These phrases are designed to support that process, helping you uncover what truly serves your well-being.



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Practicing Need Phrases

Need phrases are tools for personal introspection, designed to help you understand and validate yourself—not for use with others. They encourage self-awareness by guiding you to reflect on what truly matters to you.

Need phrases can be as simple as "I need rest" or as nuanced as "I need a sense of belonging." Whether straightforward or complex, they act as a bridge between your inner self and your ability to set boundaries that protect your well-being.

By using need phrases, you can take a step toward reclaiming your voice, reinforcing your boundaries, and embracing the self-care you deserve.

Needs Phrases

Authenticity

"I need authenticity to feel connected to myself and others."

Growth

"I need opportunities for growth to feel a sense of personal accomplishment."

Well-being

"I need to prioritize my physical well-being."

Focus

"I need a peaceful and quiet environment to focus."

Connection

"I need a more meaningful connection."

Stability

"Stability is a need for me to feel secure and grounded."

Joy

"I need more joy and play."

Safety

"I need a sense of safety to cultivate trust in my relationships."

Autonomy

"My need for autonomy supports my personal growth and self-understanding."

Peace

"I need more peace."

Heard

"I need to be heard."

Laughter

"I need laughter."

Challenge

"I need a challenge."

Needs phrases show self-awareness which is crucial for setting boundaries and sharing them.

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Practicing Need Phrases

Think about a recent situation where you may have been struggling to communicate a feeling especially if you sense it had to do with a boundary.

Situation:

Look at the needs list and see if you can identify a need that you had.

- [ ] Balance
- [ ] Contribution
- [ ] Effectiveness
- [ ] Efficiency
- [ ] Dignity
- [ ] Choice
- [ ] Rest
- [ ] To be Heard
- [ ] Community
- [ ] Equality
- [ ] Fairness
- [ ] Justice
- [ ] Respect
- [ ] Freedom
- [ ] Laughter
- [ ] Security
- [ ] Exercise
- [ ] Affection
- [ ] Appreciation
- [ ] Acceptance
- [ ] Belonging
- [ ] Clarity
- [ ] Communication
- [ ] Comfort
- [ ] Companionship
- [ ] Compassion
- [ ] Consistency
- [ ] Cooperation
- [ ] Courage
- [ ] Empathy
- [ ] Encouragement
- [ ] Stability
- [ ] Support
- [ ] Trust
- [ ] Freedom
- [ ] Friendship
- [ ] Growth
- [ ] Harmony
- [ ] Honesty
- [ ] Integrity
- [ ] Inspiration
- [ ] Intimacy
- [ ] Joy
- [ ] Kindness
- [ ] Love
- [ ] Mutual Recognition
- [ ] Nurturing
- [ ] Peace
- [ ] Play
- [ ] Recognition
- [ ] Respect
- [ ] Safety
- [ ] Understanding
- [ ] Validation
- [ ] Warmth
- [ ] Autonomy
- [ ] Independence
- [ ] Creativity
- [ ] Skill development
- [ ] To matter
- [ ] To be seen
- [ ] To be heard
- [ ] To be understood
- [ ] Touch
- [ ] Spirituality
- [ ] To be of service
- [ ] Progress
- [ ] Celebrating
- [ ] Dreaming
- [ ] Mourning
- [ ] Relaxation
- [ ] Adventure
- [ ] Fun
- [ ] Challenge
- [ ] Meaning
- [ ] Purpose
- [ ] Knowledge
- [ ] Learning
- [ ] Inclusion
- [ ] Diversity
- [ ] Nutrition
- [ ] Cleanliness Consistency
- [ ] Beauty
- [ ] Discovery
- [ ] Space
- [ ] Harmony
- [ ] Order
- [ ] Health

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Special Issue: Energetic Boundaries and Empaths

Many autistic and adhd women are particularly sensitive to the emotional states of those around them. Setting energetic boundaries is crucial. This sensitivity can sometimes lead to feeling overwhelmed or drained, especially when surrounded by emotionally demanding individuals. It may be that neurodivergent individuals are especially vulnerable to this issue. Here are some tips to help yourself with this:

Many autistic and adhd women are particularly sensitive to the emotional states of those around them. Setting energetic boundaries is crucial. This sensitivity can sometimes lead to feeling overwhelmed or drained, especially when surrounded by emotionally demanding individuals. It may be that neurodivergent individuals are especially vulnerable to this issue. Here are some tips to help yourself with this:

1

Tuning in to Your Inner Voice

Trust it. It's key for empaths to cultivate this, which our group emphasizes over time. It's not a quick journey, but gradual. Through internal dialogue, identify your feelings and needs, which are often overshadowed by others. This self-awareness helps maintain emotional balance, mitigates stress, and establish boundaries with energy-drainers.

2

Physical Boundaries and Creative Disengagement

Establish physical boundaries when you need space to pursue your special interests or quiet time. Consider creative disengagement, like excusing yourself or subtly shifting the conversation, when you sense energy drain.

3

Body Scan Meditations

This tool, shared in early sessions, eases alexithymia symptoms by promoting body relaxation and tension awareness. Find these widely online; Jon Kabat Zinn's are my preference.

4

Visualization Techniques

You can use visualization to create a mental shield or bubble around you during conversations with stressful people, allowing in only positive energy and keeping out the negative.

5

Mindful Breathing

Using mindful breathing exercises can ground you in the present moment, create distance from overwhelming feelings, and provide a much-needed energy reset.

6

Prioritizing Self-Care

Regular self-care is a form of boundary setting. This can mean setting aside time each day for relaxation or activities you enjoy for special interests. This has a cumulative effect.

For empaths, it's key to balance energy management and boundary setting for emotional health.

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Setting Boundaries in Specific Relationships

Boundaries at Work

Work environments can be particularly overwhelming for ADHD women, where demands on time, focus, and energy are constant. Setting boundaries here ensures you protect your productivity and mental health. Here's a step-by-step guide:

1

Managing Workload

Feeling overwhelmed? Politely decline additional tasks when you're at capacity. Example: "I'd love to help, but I'm currently at capacity. Let's revisit this next week."

2

Minimize Interruptions

Protect your focus time. Suggest a later discussion time for interruptions. Example: "I'm in deep work right now. Can we connect later?"

3

Set After-Hours Boundaries

Establish clear boundaries for communication outside of work. Example: "I don't check emails after 6 PM, but I'll get back to you tomorrow."

4

Use Helpful Tools

Leverage tools like calendar blocking and auto-responses to reinforce your boundaries and manage expectations.

Common Challenges (consider these when setting boundaries):

- Taking on too many tasks.
- Constant interruptions or last-minute requests.
- Lack of work-life balance due to after-hours communication.

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Boundaries in Families

Family dynamics can be tricky, especially when dealing with expectations of availability or emotional labor. ADHD women may feel obligated to “be there” for everyone, often at their own expense.

Common Challenges:

- Feeling like the go-to problem solver for family members.
- Lack of alone time due to family demands.
- Family members not respecting ADHD-specific needs, like quiet time or routines.

Example Boundaries and Scripts:

1	2	3
Emotional Labor	**Protecting Downtime**	**Respecting Routines**
“I love you and want to support you, but I’m not in a place to give advice right now. Can we revisit this later?”	“I need some quiet time to recharge. I’ll join the family activities after an hour.”	“My routine helps me stay organized. I’d appreciate it if we could stick to our agreed plan.”

Tips for Family Boundaries:

- Use “I” statements to express needs without sounding accusatory.
- Be consistent in reinforcing boundaries, even if it feels uncomfortable.
- Have a go-to phrase ready for unexpected requests, like, “Let me think about that and get back to you.”

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Boundaries with Friends

Friendships are vital, but ADHD women may find themselves overextending to maintain connections, especially with friends who rely heavily on emotional support or constant communication.

Common Challenges:

- Feeling drained by friends who vent without reciprocating.
- Guilt about not responding immediately to texts or calls.
- Balancing time with friends and personal responsibilities.

Example Boundaries and Scripts:

- **Boundary:** Limiting emotional venting
  Script: “I care about you, but I can’t give this conversation my full attention right now. Can we talk tomorrow when I can be more present?”
- **Boundary:** Response time
  Script: “I’m not always able to reply right away, but I value our friendship and will respond as soon as I can.”
- **Boundary:** Protecting personal time
  Script: “I have a lot on my plate this week, so I need to reschedule our plans. Let’s set a new date soon.”

Tips for Friend Boundaries:

Reassure

Let your friends know your boundaries are about self-care, not a lack of care for them.

Be Honest

Communicate your capacity; overextending can lead to resentment.

Schedule Intentionally

Plan time for friends to balance it with other priorities.

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Boundaries in Romantic Relationships

In romantic relationships, ADHD women may struggle with balancing emotional availability and personal needs. Healthy boundaries ensure mutual respect and foster deeper connections.

1

Emotional Space

Challenge: Feeling obligated to always be emotionally available.

Script: “I love spending time with you, but I need some alone time to recharge. Let’s plan a date night for tomorrow.”

2

ADHD-Specific Needs

Challenge: Partners not understanding ADHD-related struggles, like the need for structure or downtime.

Script: “I focus better when I stick to my routine. Can we agree on a way to support that?”

3

Communicating Expectations

Challenge: Overcommitting to shared activities at the expense of self-care.

Script: “When I’m feeling overwhelmed, I may need a little extra patience. I’ll let you know when I need help.”

Tips for Romantic Boundaries:

- Communicate openly about ADHD-related challenges and needs.
- Ensure boundaries go both ways—support your partner’s needs as well.
- Set time for shared activities while preserving personal time.

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Boundaries in Digital Interactions

The online world can be overwhelming for ADHD women, with constant notifications, social media pressures, and expectations for instant responses. Setting digital boundaries helps protect your time and mental clarity.



Response Time

Feeling pressured to reply to texts or emails immediately? Try setting a designated time to check messages.

Example: “I check emails twice a day, so I might not respond right away.”



Social Media Use

Spending too much time scrolling? Limit your social media use to reclaim your focus.

Example: “I’m limiting my time on social media to focus on other things.”



Digital Overload

Too many tasks and events on your digital calendar? Create a schedule that works for you and don't be afraid to say no.

Example: “I’m taking a break from my devices after 8 PM.”

Tips for Digital Boundaries:

- Use apps to limit screen time or block distractions.
- Turn off unnecessary notifications to reduce digital overwhelm.
- Create dedicated times for checking messages or emails.

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Reflection Prompts for Relationship Boundaries:

- What situations in my relationships feel draining or overwhelming?
- Which relationships feel unbalanced or one-sided?
- What is one small boundary I can set today to protect my energy or time?

Setting boundaries in relationships is a form of self-respect and care. When you assert your needs, you not only honor yourself but also create healthier dynamics with the people in your life. Would you like more examples, or are there specific relationships you'd like to focus on?

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Boundary Formulas for Different Situations

Formula 1: Clear but Flexible Boundary

"I need [need] when [situation]. Can we agree on [action/request]?"

Example: "I need uninterrupted focus when working from home. Can we agree to limit interruptions during my work hours?"

Formula 2: Assertive with Gentle Action

"If [situation], I will need to [action]. I hope we can avoid this."

Example: "If our meetings run over, I will need to leave at the scheduled end time. I hope we can stay within the set timeframe."

Formula 3: Direct with Collaboration

"I'm not comfortable with [situation]. I'd like to find a solution that works for both of us ."

Example: "I'm not comfortable lending money right now. I'd like to find another way I can support you."

Formula 4: Request + Validation

"I'd appreciate it if [action]. This helps me [need/goal]."

Example: "I'd appreciate it if we could plan ahead for family events. This helps me balance my time better."

Formula 5: Stating Limits with Compassion

"I can't [action] at this time. I hope you understand."

Example: "I can't take on extra projects right now. I hope you understand."

Why These Are Softer:

Collaborative – Focuses on working together rather than enforcing rigid consequences.

Gives Room for Dialogue – Invites others to participate in boundary-setting.

Uses Polite Language – Phrases like "I'd appreciate" and "Can we agree" soften the delivery while maintaining firmness.

Offers Alternatives – Shows willingness to support or find other solutions.

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Firmer Boundaries

Sometimes, boundaries don't need to be communicated, just decided upon. Firmer boundaries are non-negotiable; they state the consequence clearly and indicate follow-through.

1	2	3	4
Family	**Romantic Partner**	**Social Media**	**Digital/Work**
If conversations consistently drain me after I've asked you not to bring certain things up, I will step back from family dinners.	I need alone time to recharge. If you keep calling after I've asked you not to, I won't answer.	I will delete the app if I find myself spending too much time scrolling.	If emails come in after 6 PM, I will not respond until the next workday.

Firmer boundaries don't rely on mutual agreement—they center on personal action and follow-through. This protects well-being when negotiation is ineffective or has already been tried.