#### UNIT 5 | TOPIC 4

#### BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF: KEY PROTECTIVE APPROACHES FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR WELLBEING

TOPIC



# SETTING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES AND SELF-CARE

In this topic we will explore why setting up personal boundaries at work is essential. Whether in an office or working remotely, understanding and implementing clear boundaries ensures professional and personal well-being in a healthy manner.



The contents herein are for informational and educational purposes only and are not intended as medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always consult a qualified healthcare professional for any medical concerns or decisions.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

THIS TOPIC IS DESIGNED AROUND THE FOLLOWING MAIN LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

# 01

#### Understand the Concept of Personal Boundaries

Grasp what personal boundaries are, why they're important, and how they function as an invisible force field protecting your wellbeing.

### 03

### Navigate Personal Boundaries in the Workplace

Develop strategies for establishing and asserting personal boundaries at work to manage workload, interpersonal relationships, and stress.

# 05

### Implement Boundaries for Well-being and Productivity

Discover how well-defined boundaries contribute to personal well-being, professional growth, and overall productivity. 02

# Recognize the Importance of Self-Appreciation

Learn the crucial role of loving and valuing oneself in the effective setting and maintenance of personal boundaries.

### 04

### **Address and Overcome Guilt**

Understand the origins of guilt associated with setting boundaries and learn strategies to mitigate this guilt, enhancing your ability to maintain these boundaries without compromising your emotional health.

# COMPETENCES

### THIS TRAINING CONTENT IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU ACQUIRE THE FOLLOWING COMPETENCES:

- Of **Communication:** Clearly conveying information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the audience and helps them understand and retain the message.
- 02 Building Positive Working Relationships: Developing and using collaborative relationships to facilitate the accomplishment of work goals.
- O3 **Resilience:** Capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties, toughness.
- 04 **Self-regulation:** Ability to understand and manage your behaviour and your reactions to feelings and things happening around you.
- O5 Self-organization: Effectively organize one's schedule of activities, establishing the necessary priorities and organizing your daily routine in the most efficient way possible.
- O6 **Planning and organizing:** Establishing courses of action for self and others to ensure that work is completed efficiently.

# EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

#### Easier said than done.

While the idea of setting personal boundaries is a concept we're all familiar in theory, the real challenge lies in translating that knowledge into practical, everyday actions. Many of us find ourselves grappling with the ambiguity of implementation. Even when we summon the courage to say "No" and assert our boundaries, an unwelcome companion named guilt often comes along, creating a complex dance between our intentions and emotions. What makes applying seemingly simple concepts so difficult?

Let's start with a definition of personal boundaries that will serve us during this module.

Personal boundaries are like the invisible force fields that define your comfort zone, protecting your well-being from unwanted intrusions, ensuring your mental and emotional space stays sacred, and giving you the power to say "yes" to what aligns with your values and "no" to what doesn't.

They're the superhero capes of selfrespect, guiding you through the intricate dance of relationships with confidence and authenticity.



#### We protect what we value.

Protecting the rights and well-being of our loved ones often feels instinctive. Picture yourself standing up for your partner, child, sister, or close friends when you notice their rights being violated; you would assertively respond while respecting their boundaries.

Now, consider a different scenario—your colleagues loading you with excessive work or tasks that don't align with your preferences. Did you openly express your discomfort? When faced with a person standing too close in line, did you assert your need for personal space?

Indeed, at the heart of navigating personal boundaries lies the art of selfevaluation (and protection). The difficulty in translating this into action is hidden in our ability to wholeheartedly love and appreciate ourselves. Those who have embraced every facet of their being, strengths and vulnerabilities alike, find a natural ease in expressing their needs. This comes from a deep understanding that these needs are not just valid but also significant.

Loving yourself and recognizing your own value is a lifelong journey, often without a clear roadmap. Even as you navigate this path, you can work on setting better personal boundaries, which, in turn, helps you appreciate yourself more (because you are sending a message to yourself that you are worthy of protection).

Thus establishing and maintaining healthy personal boundaries plays an important role in self-appreciation. When you set clear boundaries, you communicate to yourself and others what you value and need. This act of self-advocacy fosters a sense of self-respect and reinforces the understanding that your needs and feelings are valid. As you consistently honour your boundaries, you cultivate a deeper connection with yourself, affirming your worth and contributing to an overall sense of well-being and self-appreciation.

The self-reinforcing cycle of self-value and boundary setting: The reciprocal process of enhancing self-worth through the establishment of personal boundaries.

# THE FUNCTIONS OF PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

#### How do they serve us?

Personal boundaries serve a complex purpose, contributing significantly to different aspects of our lives.

They have a major function in affirming our identity, acting as a compass that guides us through the intricate journey of self-discovery. These boundaries also instrumental in fostering career advancements, providing a framework that enables us to set and achieve meaningful

professional goals.

Beyond the realm of career pursuits, personal boundaries act as **protective barriers**, shielding us from the potential harm of external forces or abuse, be it emotional, physical, or otherwise.

When we establish and maintain our boundaries, we create a space that prioritizes our well-being, allowing us to navigate relationships and environments with a improved sense of self-awareness and confidence.

Moreover, personal boundaries contribute to the clarity of our choices and priorities, acting as a

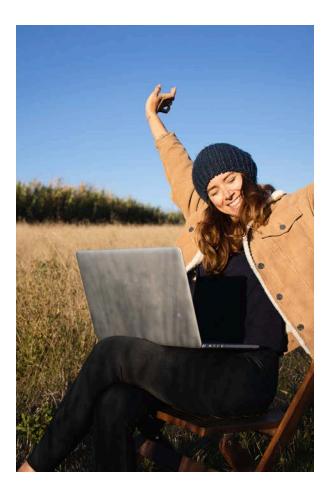


guiding principle in decisionmaking.

This structured approach helps us align our actions with our values, ensuring that our choices resonate with our authentic selves.

Additionally, these boundaries extend their protective embrace to the material aspects of our live, serving as a safeguard for the possessions and belongings we hold dear, creating a sense of security and stability.

In essence, personal boundaries function as a dynamic framework that empowers us to navigate the complexities of life with a balanced blend of self-assurance, purpose, and protection.





### How do they contribute to work-related stress management?

The work-related stress navigation can be a skillful art when we master the art of personal boundaries. Picture this: your work-life equilibrium is delicately balanced, with clear distinctions between professional duties and personal bliss. It's more than a mere separation; it's a strategic dance of time management.

Picture yourself confidently communicating your availability, setting realistic expectations, and gracefully affirming the liberating "no" when needed. These are the gifts of the well-defined personal boundaries, acting as your armor against the overwhelming tides of excessive workload. When the workplace becomes a stage for interpersonal dynamics, your boundaries can serve as a script, supporting you on how to engage with others.

Imagine the stress relief when autonomy and control are not distant dreams but everyday realities, allowing you to steer your professional ship with confidence.

As you cultivate personal boundaries, you're not just creating limits; you're crafting a **narrative of self-care**. Mental health is not a luxury; it's a priority, integrated into your work routine.

In this educational journey, personal boundaries emerge as the unsung heroes, **offering a proactive strategy for stress management**. They transform the workplace into a harmonious arena where your well-being takes center stage, and you orchestrate a symphony of balance, communication, and self-advocacy.

Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.

**Brené Brown** 

# THE NARRATIVE THAT DOESN'T HELP

### What do we tell ourselves when we fail to establish healthy boundaries?

When we find ourselves failing in the of establishment healthy boundaries, a chorus of internal narratives often begins. We might tell ourselves that prioritizing our needs is selfish, fearing potential judgment or alienation from others. The voice of self-doubt may chime in, whispering that we are undeserving of the respect and space we seek.

Alternatively, a sense of guilt might surface, questioning our right to assert limits in various aspects of life. These internal dialogues can be shaped by societal expectations or personal insecurities, creating a complex mix of emotions that hinder the formation of crucial boundaries.

To recognize and to challenge these self-limiting beliefs becomes paramount in the journey toward cultivating and maintaining boundaries that foster well-being and authentic connections.

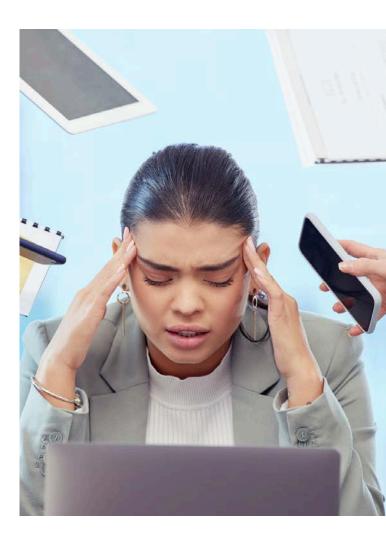




"THOSE WHO GET ANGRY WHEN YOU SET A BOUNDARY ARE THE ONES YOU NEED TO SET BOUNDARIES FOR."

J.S. Wolfe, The Pathology of Innocence





### Let's dive in. violated personal boundaries at the workplace.

Violated personal boundaries at the workplace can manifest in many ways (and on different levels: physical, mental, emotional, etc), often impacting our well-being and professional expression and satisfaction.

Next, we will explore some common examples that can lead to increased stress and possible reactions.

# EXAMPLE 1: EXCESSIVE WORKLOAD

### HOW IT IS MANIFESTED:

Assigning consistently overwhelming workloads without regard for an individual's capacity can violate personal boundaries. This may lead to burnout, stress, and a sense of being undervalued.

Example: Receiving new project assignments consistently, with tight deadlines and overlapping timelines, leading to a situation where completing tasks within regular working hours becomes challenging.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Set clear expectations: Communicate with your supervisor about your workload capacity and negotiate realistic deadlines. Be assertive in expressing when tasks exceed your current

Examples:

capabilities.

- "I'd like to discuss my current workload and explore ways to ensure a more manageable schedule. Can we go over my responsibilities and perhaps adjust deadlines to better align with my capacity?"
- "I've noticed a consistent high volume of tasks, and I believe establishing clear expectations regarding my workload would benefit both the quality of my work and overall productivity. Can we discuss ways to make adjustments?"

# EXAMPLE 2: MICROMANAGEMENT

#### HOW IT IS MANIFESTED:

Overly intrusive supervision, where managers scrutinize every detail of an employee's work, can infringe upon personal autonomy and professional space, eroding trust and causing frustration.

Example: Having a manager who closely monitors every step of your work, insists on daily progress reports, and frequently intervenes in tasks, creating a stifling work environment and atmosphere of distrust.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Establish communication: Initiate a conversation with your manager to discuss your work style and how you can collaborate effectively. Share your desire for a bit more autonomy while ensuring them of your commitment to meeting expectations.

Examples:

- "I've been reflecting on my work style and how I can contribute most effectively to our team. I'd love to have a conversation with you about it, explore ways to collaborate more seamlessly, and discuss how I can take on a bit more autonomy in my role."
- "I believe that understanding each other's work styles can greatly enhance our collaboration. Would you be open to a conversation where we can discuss my approach to work and how we can align it with team expectations while allowing for a bit more autonomy?"

# EXAMPLE 3: UNWANTED PHYSICAL CONTACT

#### **HOW IT IS MANIFESTED:**

Inappropriate physical contact, such as unwelcome touching or invasion of personal space, constitutes a clear violation of personal boundaries and is a form of workplace harassment

Example: Experiencing a coworker consistently invading your personal space by touching your shoulders or initiating hugs without your consent, creating discomfort, and violating physical boundaries.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Set physical boundaries: Politely but firmly communicate your discomfort with the physical contact. Clearly express your preference for maintaining personal space and request respect for your boundaries.

Examples:

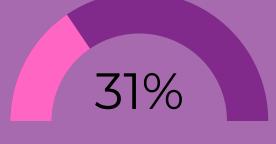
- "I appreciate our working relationship, but I wanted to let you know that I'm not comfortable with physical contact in the workplace. I prefer to maintain a bit more personal space. I hope you understand, and I appreciate your respect for my boundaries."
- "I hope this comes across respectfully, but I wanted to discuss personal boundaries. I'm not comfortable with physical contact in a professional setting, and I would appreciate it if we could maintain a bit more distance. Thank you for understanding."

# 51%

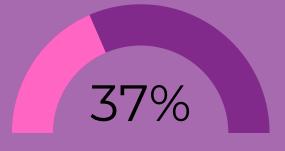
51% believe hugging does not belong in a professional environment

41% have witnessed bullying in the workplace

41%



31% have received an unwelcome hug in the workplace



37% believe that their coworkers are too informal on workplace chat or messaging

According to UDEMY IN DEPTH: 2019 Workplace Boundaries Report, more than half of the employees report too much physical contact at the workplace.

Source: UDEMY IN DEPTH: 2019 Workplace Boundaries Report

#### Practicaly about the workplace boundaries

When we speak of the workplace, setting personal boundaries is not just about defining how much work you can take on or separating your personal and professional time. It's about cultivating an environment where mutual respect and understanding form the basis of all interactions. **This includes respecting others' boundaries as much as asserting your own** and creating a culture of empathy and consideration.

# WAYS TO ESTABLISH PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

### **DISCOVER AND COMMUNICATE**

Begin by identifying what your boundaries are. What hours are you willing to work? How much additional responsibility can you take on without compromising your well-being? Once these are clear in your mind, communicate them to your colleagues and superiors assertively. It's not about saying "no" to everything; it's about saying "yes" to what you can manage effectively and without resentment and hopefuly with joy.

### **PRACTICE SELF-AWARENESS**

Self-awareness is key in recognizing when a boundary is being violated or when you need to establish a new one or towards new group of people. If you pay attention to how you feel about requests or expectations from others, you would be able to evaluate your area of comfort.

### WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In the digital age, where work can follow us home through our devices, it's crucial to establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. This might mean turning off work emails after a certain hour or having a dedicated workspace that you can step away from at the end of the day.

### **REGULARLY REEVALUATE YOUR BOUNDARIES**

Personal and professional needs change over time, and so should your boundaries. Regularly reevaluating what works for you and what doesn't is crucial in maintaining a healthy work environment for yourself and others.

### **Navigating Challenges**

Setting boundaries at work can sometimes lead to pushback or misunderstandings. Not everyone will find it to their liking. If someone reacts negatively to your boundaries, try to understand their perspective and explain your needs calmly and clearly. Often, issues arise from miscommunication or differing expectations, which can be resolved through open dialogue.

However, you are not required to explain in detail your reasoning behild the needs vou are communicating. Your mind is a private space and you are free to share as much as you want and it is reasonable. Boundary setting is a that process requires practice. patience, and persistence.

It's about finding the balance between your needs and the demands of your workplace. By doing so, you not only protect your well-being but also contribute to a more respectful and productive work environment.

Your boundaries are form of selfrespect and not selfishness. They are a way to honor your needs, values, and capacity (both in terms of time and energy), which ultimately allows you to perform at your best and foster healthy professional relationships. As you become more confident in setting and reenforcing boundaries, you'll likely notice a positive shift in your work-life balance, job satisfaction, and overall mental health. This is the true power of personal boundaries at work: they enable you to thrive, not just survive.



### Understanding & Overcoming Workplace Guilt

One of the main things preventing us from asserting or even establishing our personal boundaries, is the overwhelming sense of guilt.

Guilt in the workplace often comes clash from а between our professional obligations and our personal values or needs. It can be quite intense when we try to set boundaries that go against the general workplace culture or when we fear disappointing our colleagues and superiors. The fear of being perceived as uncooperative or not a team player (or in generally the fear of not being liked) can enforse this quilt, making the act of setting boundaries feels like a rebellion rather than a healthy practice.

One of the best things we can do is to reframe our perspective, and how we view boundaries. Rather than seeing them barriers as to cooperation, view them as essential components of a healthy work environment. Boundaries allow us to perform at our best, which in turn team benefits the and the organization as a whole. Emphasize that setting boundaries is not a selfish act but a form of self-respect and respect for your colleagues, who also benefit from clarity and honest communication.

Communication of boundaries is not an aggressive act, as many of us believe, that they will appear rude if speak out their "No". Instead. communication can be quite gentle and empathic. When asserting boundaries, do so with empathy and understanding of the other person's perspective. Clearly explain your reasoning and the positive impact your boundary will have on your work quality and well-being. This approach can mitigate feelings of guilt by framing your boundaries as constructive rather than obstructive.



QUOTE



# NOTHING IS MORE WRETCHED THAN THE MIND OF A MAN CONSCIOUS OF GUILT.

Plautus

### Small actions, big gains

- Contribute to normalizing the practice of setting boundaries within your workplace culture. Even only by talking about it.
- Share your experiences & positive outcomes of setting boundaries with your colleagues.
- Be open to discussions about work-life balance, mental health, and the importance of respecting individual limits.
- Lead by example show others what does if feel like their boudaries to be respected.

#### Be gentle with yourself

Feeling guilty is a natural response to prioritizing your needs in a society that often glorifies self-sacrifice. However, not everything we tend to think is normal, is also right.

If you worry too much that you will hurt other's feelings by protecting your own needs, please, remind yourself, that yes, you might hurt some feelings now, but in the longrun, only honest and mutual relationships last. Especially at the workplace.

While guilt is a common companion in the journey of setting personal boundaries, it's not unavoidable. You can always try to reframe your perspective, practice open and compassionate communication, normalizing boundary setting, and cultivating self-compassion. Because we protect, what we value. By doing so, we not only improve the quality of our professional lives but also contribute to a healthier, more respectful workplace culture where everyone can thrive.

Setting boundaries is not just about saying no to others, but about saying yes to a more balanced, fulfilling life.



# **PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #1**



#### Mapping out our boundaries

The objective of the activity is to visually map out our personal boundaries related to work, identifying areas where boundaries are either lacking or need reinforcement.

Materials Needed: Paper, colored pens or markers, and a quiet space for reflection.

Instructions:

#### 1. Draw your boundary map

- Begin by drawing a circle in the center of your paper; this represents you.
- Around this circle, draw other shapes (squares, triangles, etc.) to represent different aspects of your work life (e.g., tasks, colleagues, work hours, work-related communication).

#### 2. Color code your boundaries

Use different colors to shade or outline these shapes based on how well you feel your boundaries are currently maintained in each area (e.g., green for healthy boundaries, yellow for areas needing caution, red for boundaries that are frequently crossed).

#### 3. Reflect and Note

For each area, write down what a healthy boundary looks like for you. Be specific. For example, "I do not check work emails after 6 PM" or "I will delegate tasks when my workload is too high to maintain quality".

#### 4. Identify actions

For areas marked yellow or red, list specific actions you can take to strengthen these boundaries. This might include conversations with colleagues, setting clear expectations with your boss, or using tools to manage your time and tasks better.

#### 5. Review regularly

Keep your boundary map in a place where you can see it daily. Update it as you strengthen your boundaries and as your work situation changes. Coming back to review your commitments will help you stay mindful of your needs and how to protect them best.

# **PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #2**



#### **Role-play scenarios**

The objective of this activity is to practice setting boundaries in common workplace situations that challenge personal limits.

Materials Needed: a partner for role-playing (a colleague, friend, or family member), and a quiet, comfortable space.

Instructions:

#### **1. Prepare Scenarios**

Write down or print out scenarios that typically challenge boundaries at work. Examples include being asked to work late on short notice, handling a colleague who constantly interrupts your work, or dealing with requests that fall outside your job responsibilities.

#### 2. Role-play

Take turns with your partner role-playing each scenario. One person acts as the employee setting the boundary, while the other plays the role of the colleague or boss. Swap roles for each scenario to get different perspectives.

#### 3. Practice Assertive Communication

Use "I" statements to express your needs clearly and respectfully. For instance, "I understand the importance of this project, but I have prior commitments this evening. Can we discuss a timeline that allows for quality work within our schedules?"

#### 4. Discuss and Reflect

After each role-play, discuss what felt challenging and what strategies could make setting boundaries easier. Reflect on the emotions and reactions involved in each interaction.

#### 5. Develop a Personal Action Plan

Based on the role-plays, create a list of strategies or phrases you can use in real situations. This plan can include how to say no politely, how to request a discussion about workload, or how to negotiate deadlines.

# **EXPERIENTAL ACTIVITY**

#### The Boundary Walk

Walk The Boundary is а straightforward, solo activity designed to enhance personal awareness and understanding of one's own boundaries within the context of the workplace. This activity requires minimal materials and preparation, focusing on introspection, boundary visualization, and mental rehearsal.

Materials Needed:

- Comfortable walking shoes.
- A quiet, safe place to walk, such as a park, walking path, or even a quiet room if outdoor space is not available. Best would be to start from your workplace.
- A small notebook or voice recording app on your phone (optional, for taking notes).

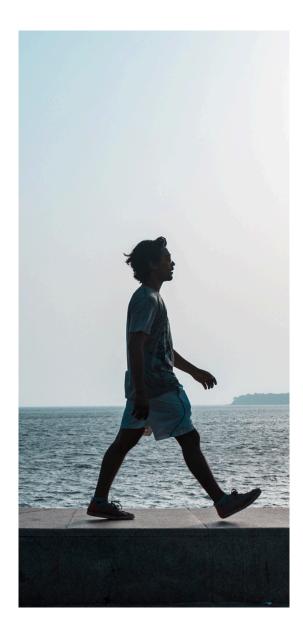
Duration: 30 minutes to 1 hour.

#### **GET STARTED BY:**

Instructions

#### **1. Preparation**

Choose a time and place where you can walk undisturbed for at least 30 minutes. Before starting your walk, take a few deep breaths to center yourself and clear your mind.



#### 2. Identify Your Boundaries

As you begin walking (it is recommended that you start the walk from your workplace), think about the boundaries you currently have or wish to establish in your workplace. These might include physical boundaries (like personal space), emotional boundaries (such as keeping work stress from affecting your home life), or time boundaries (like not working beyond your scheduled hours).

#### 3. Visualize Your Boundaries

Continue walking and with each step, visualize a specific boundary. Imagine drawing a line around yourself that represents this boundary. Think about how it feels to have this boundary respected versus when it's crossed. Notice any emotional or physical reactions you have to these thoughts.

#### 4. Mental Rehearsal

Choose one boundary that feels particularly important or challenging. As you walk, mentally rehearse a scenario where you assertively communicate this boundary at work. Imagine yourself speaking calmly and clearly, explaining your needs and why this boundary is important to you.

#### 5. Reflection and Planning:

If you brought a notebook or are using a voice recording app, stop at a comfortable spot to jot down or record your thoughts. Reflect on the following questions:

- Which boundaries feel most vital to my well-being and effectiveness at work?
- What steps can I take to communicate or reinforce these boundaries?
- How did I feel visualizing the enforcement of my boundaries?

#### 6. Conclude Your Walk and Commit

As you finish your walk, commit to taking one small action based on you reflections. This could be a conversation you plan to have, a change in your work habits, or even setting up a physical reminder of your boundaries.

# ASSESSMENT

#### 01.

What is the primary purpose of setting personal boundaries?

- A- To limit your interactions with others
- B- To protect your wellbeing and ensure your mental and emotional space is respected
- C- To avoid taking on new challenges

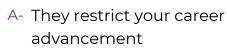
#### 02.

Which of the following best describes personal boundaries?

- A- Rules that are imposed on us by society
- B- Invisible lines that define your comfort zone and protect your well-being
- C- Physical barriers between you and others

#### 03.

How do personal boundaries contribute to your professional life?



- B- They help in setting and achieving meaningful professional goals
- C- They make you less approachable to colleagues

### 04.

What often accompanies the act of setting boundaries, making the process challenging?



# ASSESSMENT

#### 05.

What is a key factor in the successful implementation of personal boundaries?

- A- Avoiding all social interactions at work
- B- The ability to say "no" to additional responsibilities
- C- Loving yourself and recognizing your own value.

#### 06.

Which activity helps in the healthy establishment of personal boundaries at the workplace?

- A- Boundary Mapping to visually identify and plan for maintaining boundaries.
- B- Ignoring messages and requests from colleagues
- C- Only focusing on personal tasks and ignoring team projects

### 07.

What is a practical step in managing guilt associated with setting boundaries?

- A- Ignore your feelings and push through.
- B- Acknowledge the source of guilt and address it

C- Increase your workload to compensate

#### 08.

How can personal boundaries affect your sense of selfappreciation?

- A- By lowering your selfesteem as you say no to others
- B- Through diminishing your professional relationships
- C- By fostering a sense of self-respect and validating your needs and feelings

# **ASSESSMENT ANSWERS**

1- B	2- B	3- B	<b>4-</b> A
5-C	6 - A	7 - B	8 - C

# **KEY TAKEAWAYS**



Identify and counteract self-limiting beliefs that hinder the establishment of personal boundaries, enabling a healthier approach to managing professional and personal demands.

# **RESOURCE LIBRARY**

Explore practical tools and resources on setting and maintaining healthy boundaries, from worksheets and guided series to expert talks. Learn effective strategies for navigating boundary conflicts and violations to improve relationships and reduce stress.



### **PRACTICLE TOOLS AND WORKSHEETS:**

The presented article contains several healthy boundaries worksheets that you can use to create practical and valued boundaries.

READ THE ARTICLE



### **DEMARCATION CONFLICT**

The article explores demarcation conflicts at the workplace and their resolution. Demarcation is the process of fixing the boundary or limits of something.

READ THE ARTICLE



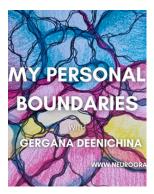
### **BOUNDARIES VIOLATION RESPONSE**

This is a simple, yet quite good guide on how to respond to boundary violation. An effective response occurs when your primary needs are\_met well enough, and both people feel <u>respected</u> enough.

**READ THE ARTICLE** 

# **RESOURCE LIBRARY**

Explore practical tools and resources on setting and maintaining healthy boundaries, from worksheets and guided series to expert talks. Learn effective strategies for navigating boundary conflicts and violations to improve relationships and reduce stress.



### **MY PERSONAL BOUNDARIES**

Guided Neurographica series for understanding the importance of setting and maintaining personal boundaries for a healthy, balanced life.

WATCH ON YOUTUBE



### **MY PERSONAL BOUNDARIES**

Sarri Gilman has found that clear boundaries enhance relationships and the quality of life. In this wonderful TED talk she shares how to place boundaries where you need them most to lower your stress.

WATCH ON YOUTUBE

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