Setting Boundaries - Looking Within

Use the questions below to help you explore your current relationship with workplace boundaries:

Did your parents or caretakers clearly set boundaries for themselves while you were growing up? If so, how? What lessons did you learn about boundaries by watching them?

Did your parents or caretakers set boundaries for you while you were growing up? If so, how? What lessons did you learn about boundaries by experiencing this?

At work, where do you struggle most (or with whom) when it comes to setting boundaries? Why?

What are your personal signs that you're in need of setting a boundary (feeling resentment, working too many hours, coming in late, snapping, etc.)?

Which of the 5 key workplace boundaries do you have the most difficulty with (physical, emotional, mental, material, time)?

Guilt, resentment and anger are often signs that boundaries need to be drawn or strengthen. When it comes to work, are you harboring any of these feelings? If so, what is it around? How would establishing boundaries improve your situation?

When it comes to setting boundaries, what do you fear most? Why?

What new insights have you gained from this talk to help you better create and sustain workplace boundaries?

What will happen to you if you're able to set and hold more boundaries at work?

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Setting Boundaries - The Steps

STEP 1: Gain Awareness. It's important to get a clear understanding of the situation before you set a boundary. Ask yourself:

- What am I feeling resentful, angry, or guilty about? Is there a larger theme?

- What in the situation have I lost control around? What boundary is missing?

- Why is there a boundary missing? What do I fear will happen if I set one?

- Determine the boundary you need to set and who it's with. Is this boundary realistic and fair? Work through any expectations or assumptions.

- Is there anything else you need clarity on before finalizing your boundary?

STEP 2: Validation and Ownership. Read over what you wrote above - validate your feelings and have compassion for yourself. Remind yourself that your needs, feelings and opinions are important. Then commit to taking full responsibility for establishing the determined boundary above.

STEP 3: Finalize the Boundary. Determine the exact boundary you want to set. Example (a manager speaking to a direct report who doesn't do 8hrs in the office daily but needs to - "I need everyone on my team in the office 8hrs daily, how those hours are split up is flexible. Come in early, leave early, etc."

TIPS:
- **Make it about you** (not another person)
- **If the person has crossed boundaries before, include a consequence**
    - Example continued from above - "I need everyone on my team in the office 8hrs daily, if you continue to do less than this, we'll start using a time sheet."
- **If there is good, lead with it, start with what's working**
- **Create an opener that you're comfortable with -** Example - when saying "no" to an offer, lead with "Thanks for including me or thinking about me."

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Setting Boundaries - The Steps

STEP 4: *Share the Boundary*. It's important that you clearly state your boundary and confirm it's understood. It's also equally important that when the boundary is shared, there is open communication and a shared connection.

TIPS:

- **Stick to the facts -** don't let your emotion take the wheel
- **Confirm that the boundary was understood**
- **Leave the door open for communication - questions and feedback.** Sometimes people can share additional information that may create a desire to modify your boundary.
- **Respond don't react**

STEP 5: Enforce *the Boundary*. Setting a boundary can be challenging but it's only part of sustaining strong boundaries in the workplace, enforcing the boundary is another key component. In order to hold your boundary, you must keep an eye on it and if it gets crossed, take appropriate action.

TIPS:

- **Check in with yourself at the end of each day to reflect how the boundary is working, is it being honored?**
- **Reminder -** boundaries from a setting standpoint are flexible. You can change your mind as time goes by and modify it as needed, just be sure to tell everyone involved if they change.
- **If someone crosses a boundary, speak to them about it as soon as possible (at the right time and place).** Lead with curiosity vs. blame. Figure out what happened and then get everyone back on track.