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Setting Boundaries to Ease Stress

Our team recently completed a mental health training which also talked about self-care. While not specifically on our self-care action plan, this made me reflect on how I am doing in setting boundaries with relationships, work, and even social media.

Not always an easy task, think of setting boundaries as a way to practice self-care, gain self-respect, and to honor your closest relationships. Here are some simple ways to get started.

- **Recognize your feelings/wants/needs and write them down.** Take some time to identify your feelings as they come and what causes your reaction. What specifically causes you stress or frustration?
You might try a boundary circle exercise in which you write down inside a circle the things you need to be supported and what you want in relationships. Place items that distract from this on the outside.
- **Recognize what boundaries need to be set.** Once the above is identified, you can work to resolve any issues by setting a boundary. Set your limits and stick to them. For example, if answering work items in the evening is interfering with family time, let your co-workers know you will be responding to items between 8-6pm, Monday through Friday.
- **Make boundaries clearly known.** Kindly, honestly, and directly let others know your boundaries so they may be respected and understood. Assertive language can help by not allowing room for debate and not blaming who you are communicating with. Use “I” statements, active listening, and eye contact for a more positive interaction.
- **Practice and take care of you.** Fear and guilt are natural feelings and barriers to boundaries. Learning to say ‘no’ at times will be challenging. Practice with a safe friend. Remember that working on your boundaries can lead to a healthier, happier lifestyle and is not a selfish attitude.

Today’s article was adapted from Michigan State University Extension’s *Tips for Setting Boundaries*, and University of Arkansas Research and Extension’s *Boundary Setting Worksheet*. For more information, please contact Tara Solomon-Smith, tsolomon@ksu.edu, or by calling 620-724-8233.

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