



Setting Healthy Boundaries

I can honestly say that learning how to set healthy boundaries has saved my motherhood. And my marriage and life in general...but that's another eBook for another time.

For our purposes here, I'm going to focus on setting healthy boundaries in motherhood.

A couple years into my self-care journey I hit a wall. I felt so miserable and trapped. And so guilty because I had always dreamed of being a mom, but it really didn't look how I thought it would look.

I felt overwhelmed, exhausted and – most horrifying to me – resentful and angry.

That's when I realized that I wasn't going to get very far unless I learned how to set healthy boundaries.

Part of my anger and resentment stemmed from feeling out of control, like motherhood was happening to me and I had no say over how it looked. Which of course I did, I just had to use my voice.

Whenever I find myself struggling with anger or resentment (in any area of life) now, I always ask myself: where and how do I feel out of control?

Feeling out of control usually stems from not setting healthy boundaries. And we all thrive with boundaries.

Here are just a few reasons why:

- Setting healthy boundaries checks our pride. We are not superhuman with limitless amounts of time, energy or resources. Let's not fool ourselves into acting like we are.
- Setting healthy boundaries informs others of our limits. Some people don't know and some people don't care. Either way, it's not fair to them or to us not to be clear about our limits.
- Setting healthy boundaries ensures we have what we need for the things and the people who matter most. It ensures we're not wasting precious time, energy or resources on the unimportant stuff.
- Setting healthy boundaries keeps us safe. When we don't have boundaries, anything goes. And anyone goes. We need protection from our own human nature and others who might take advantage of us.
- Setting healthy boundaries teaches our kiddos how to set healthy boundaries, a skill they will need for a successful life.

You see, mama, self-care isn't just warm drinks, detox baths, staying hydrated and doing brain dumps. It's not just about getting a nap or time alone or taking five minutes to put on make up. It is all those things and so much more. It's also the hard stuff, the heavier stuff. Like learning how to set healthy boundaries.

Here are some practical steps to setting healthy boundaries:

1.) Identify a problem area in your life. i.e.. Something that is wearing on you, draining you, perhaps even causing you anxiety and/or affecting your physical health.

Example: You can't seem to put your phone down. Sounds and badges and notifications are constantly calling for your attention. You get a lot of texts and a lot of emails. You're constantly checking and rechecking your phone. You're always trying to answer a text, read an email or respond to someone on social media. You're always distracted, trying to be in two places at once. You have a mental buzz that never really goes away.

2.) Identify your limits in that area.

Example: I don't have endless amounts of time to respond to texts, emails and notifications. I can only be in one place at a time. I have an hour per day I'm able and willing to give. I'll handle the most important and leave the rest.

3.) Set healthy boundaries based on those limits.

Example: I'm going to answer emails and texts for 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in evening, that's all the time I have. I'm going to turn off all notifications except for texts from my spouse, everyone else can wait. I will check social media for half hour in the evenings when I'm not distracted.

Here are some more examples of how you might set healthy boundaries:

You cut ties with anyone who doesn't lift you up. Starting with face to face relationships down to the people you follow on social media. You are kind but unapologetic. If you need to, you have the hard conversations.

You say no to any extra-curricular activities that don't fill your cup. You are ruthless. You only get 24 hours in a day and every day is a gift.

You keep to firm wake times, quiet time/nap times and bed times for your kiddos. You find this to be a game changer because you need space at those times each day to care for yourself so that you can be a better mom.

You create and follow a budget each month. Especially during the holidays. You realize that managing your finances is self-care, too.

Here are a few ways I set boundaries in my motherhood:

I say no to over commitment and leave plenty of margin in our days. I think really, really hard about how plans will play out before I say yes to anything. If I feel anything but a "YES!" it's a no. Most days we are at home. If we do go somewhere, it's rarely ever before 10am or after 6pm. No rushing. No early mornings or late nights. No burning the candle at both ends. I also usually only have 2-3 "to do" tasks in a day so that I'm not overwhelmed by all that has to get done in a day.

I have a firm wake up time for the kiddos (more on this in the next chapter). They don't get to leave their room in the morning until a specific time. That might sound intense, but it's what works for us. They can get up, use the restroom and play quietly whenever they want, but they stay in their room with the door closed.

I also have firm nap/quiet time and bed times. For my sake and for theirs! Remember, mama: we're modeling stress reduction for our kids. Routines that ensure adequate rest + sleep are so important.

I like to keep our weekends mostly free. Rarely do we have something scheduled two weekends in a row.

I don't respond to my children's every request immediately. If I'm in the middle of something and their need is not a matter of life or death, I tell them I will be happy to help them when I am finished. It's okay for our kids to have to wait, to learn that the world doesn't revolve around them. When it's reasonable, resist distraction and teach your kiddos to do the same.

I make sure to voice my own needs. One example of this (and tell me if this scenario is familiar): I often find that when I settle in to do something for myself – pour a warm drink and sip it while it's hot, for example – everything seems to hit the fan. That's the standard quip, right? How many times we've had to re-heat our coffee in a morning? But what if we refused to accept the status quo? What if we teach our kiddos that we need time, too. We need those moments of peace sprinkled throughout the day in order to mother well? What if we sent them outside to play so we can sip our coffee? Set that boundary. Don't be afraid to voice your needs.

Pen and Paper Prompt

Let's get personal.

Where are some areas that you feel out of control? Like your motherhood is happening to you? Make a list of pain points where you need to create some boundaries.

Self-Care Prompt

Let's get practical.

Take the list you just made, choose one pain point and follow the steps I outlined to address it. Set that boundary. Be persistent. Be consistent. You've got this, mama.