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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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