



SETTING BOUNDARIES

EFFECTIVE, AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION

CLEAR IS KIND

UNCLEAR IS UNKIND

In her book, *Dare to Lead*, academic Brené Brown writes about a slogan that she first heard at an Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step programme: 'Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind.'

What is meant by this is that if you are unwilling to have uncomfortable conversations, your needs and expectations will be unclear to others.

Being clear means trusting in your own voice, understanding that those who matter won't mind if you are clear.

Being unclear with your boundaries often stems from an element of people pleasing and wanting to be liked,

Other times, the fear comes from not feeling able to say no to a manager, or not wanting to disappoint people in your life.

This is where disappointment and resentment can kick in.

You dwell on it, maybe have a moan to others, or reach a tipping point where all your feelings come out in a torrent.

“MOST OF US AVOID CLARITY BECAUSE WE TELL OURSELVES THAT WE'RE BEING KIND, WHEN WHAT WE'RE ACTUALLY DOING IS BEING UNKIND AND UNFAIR. FEEDING PEOPLE HALF-TRUTHS OR BULLSHIT TO MAKE THEM FEEL BETTER (WHICH IS ALMOST ALWAYS ABOUT MAKING OURSELVES FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE) IS UNKIND.”

Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead*



WHY YOU SHOULD SET HEALTHY BOUDARIES

If you do not clearly demonstrate and communicate your boundaries, how can you expect others to respect them?

As Brene Brown wrote in Rising Strong "How can we expect people to put value on our work when we don't value ourselves enough to set and hold uncomfortable boundaries?"

Your workplace

Managers: Not being clear about your expectations but still expecting them to deliver without communicating the outcomes you want is unkind. They are not mind-readers!

Team members: If your manager has been unclear, you have a personal responsibility and right to ask for clarification on anticipated outcomes, timescales etc.

Colleagues: Refrain from blaming or gossiping about co-workers. To truly create trust and engagement, allow time and space for honest, productive mutual feedback.

Clients: consistently asking your suppliers for that little bit more without prior agreement or remuneration is unkind. Agree service parameters as far as possible in advance and agree terms, scope and billing terms if more is needed.

Service Providers: Do not keep jumping through hoops. Be clear with your own terms and values.

Your personal space

Be clear with others about your personal boundaries. Let them know what works for you and why you need it. For example "X expects me to deliver work between 9 and 5pm" "I have a deadline to meet by X and need to focus so I will need minimum interruption/quiet to achieve this."

If you live or work alongside others, use this as an opportunity to have an open discussion about what works for all and find compromises where appropriate.

N.B. Being clear with your own boundaries doesn't mean you get to dictate to others!



**BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD...
IMPECCABILITY OF THE WORD IS SO
IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE WORD IS YOU, THE
MESSENGER. THE WORD IS ALL ABOUT THE
MESSAGE YOU DELIVER, NOT JUST TO
EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING AROUND YOU,
BUT THE MESSAGE YOU DELIVER TO YOURSELF.**

Don Miguel Ruez, The Four Agreements



WHY YOU SHOULD SET HEALTHY BOUDARIES

Boundaries (or lack of them) are learned and have often been set from childhood. The good news is that you can always set new boundaries. And the more you work at this, over time, the stronger your personal boundaries become.

If you truly want to be kind to yourself and to others, speaking your truth and setting out your needs and expectations with clarity is important. I use the following filters, attributed to both Buddha and Socrates. Whomever said it, it's useful.

IS IT KIND? IS IT TRUE? IS IT NECESSARY?

Your personal relationships

Understanding your own core values and needs will help you to set and keep boundaries within your relationships of all kinds.

What is most important to you? What kind of behaviour do you not appreciate? In which situations do you want to spend time with others - just at work, only for coffee, invited to each others homes?

Taking a lead on how, when, where and how often you see people can help to manage their expectations.

Explaining that energy levels, personal/work/other commitments do not allow for more is clear and kind.

Ending relationships that are no longer right for your current stage life is kind (in the long run).

When you fail to speak your truth and do not set and maintain boundaries, you are not being kind to yourself or others. Be clear.

Your communications

Say what you mean and mean what you say. There may be times when boundaries shift or change but communicate what these changes mean for you and for those involved as appropriate.

Refrain from gossip. Speaking about somebody behind their back (unless it's positive) is unkind. You are not giving them an opportunity to respond.

And you can bet that those you are gossiping with are secretly wondering what you say about them when they're not present. Be kind.

“ **DON'T ALLOW PEOPLE PLEASING TO GET IN THE WAY OF DOING WHAT IS RIGHT. NOBODY IS UNIVERSALLY LIKED, NOT EVEN THE DALAI LAMA.** ”

Anj Handa, Founder, Inspiring Women Changemakers