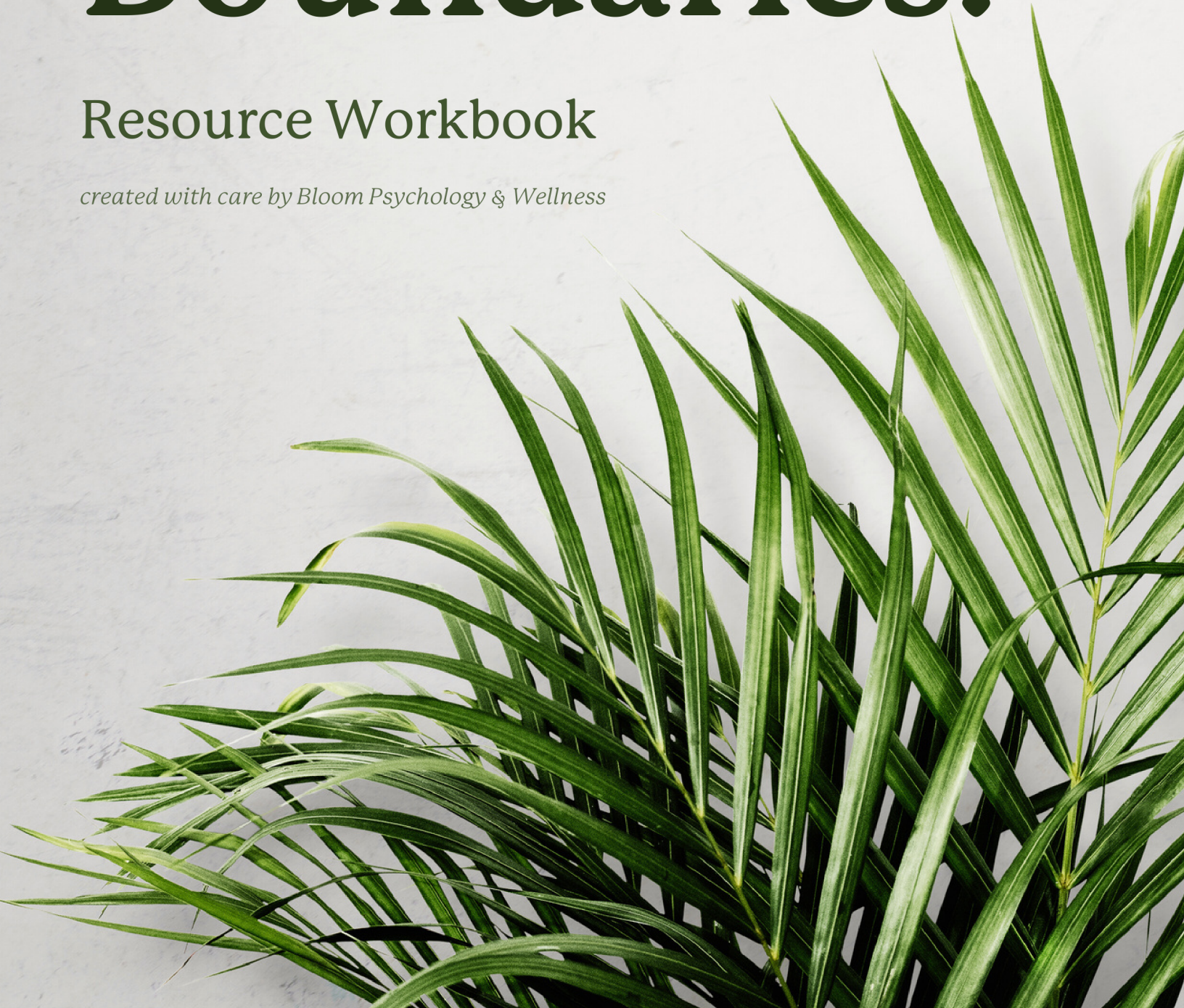


# Exploring Boundaries.

Resource Workbook

*created with care by Bloom Psychology & Wellness*



# BOUNDARIES

## 101

Boundaries are important for everyday life. They teach us how to create space for the things that matter to us in life. When we set boundaries we say yes to the experiences that sustain us, and say no to the experiences that drain us. Boundaries allow us to create necessary limits that support the pursuit of our goals and can help improve important relationships at home and at work.

***definition:***

**bound·ary | \ 'baʊn-d(ə-)rē**

Boundaries refers to the “line (literal and metaphorical) that marks the limits of a particular area”.

"Boundaries are something that indicates or fixes a limit or extent." -  
*Merriam-Webster*

**Reflection Question: How do you define and use boundaries in your daily life?**

# HOW BOUNDARIES SHOW UP

## TYPES OF BOUNDARIES YOU MIGHT NOTICE:

- **Time/Energy**
  - e.g. how much time you give to work and people
- **Emotional/Relational**
  - e.g. how often you spend time with someone
- **Physical**
  - e.g. body boundaries, physical proximity + space
- **Spiritual**
  - e.g. the boundaries around your belief systems
- **Intellectual**
  - e.g. limits on your copyright, work, intellectual property
- **Sexual**
  - e.g. consent + safety boundaries
- **Property/ Resources**
  - limits around things you own and use

**Reflection Question: What boundary types do you struggle with the most, and why? Describe below.**



# SIGNS YOU MAY NEED STRONGER BOUNDARIES:

- Your schedule is always **overbooked and difficult to manage**.
- You feel **strong obligations to satisfy others needs** and rarely consider your own.
- **Keeping yourself accountable** to your own limits is challenging.
- Noticing feelings of **discomfort when saying no or when disappointing others**.
- You're often **overwhelmed** by the thought of **not "being enough."**
- You worry that **others might be put off by you setting a limit**.

Boundary setting is on a spectrum, and understanding the type of boundary you want to maintain, as well as how *rigid, flexible or permeable* you want the boundary to be can be helpful. Learning how to *identify, set and communicate* boundaries at home and at work takes practice. Try the following tools as you begin to clarify and set boundaries in your life:

1. Journal or self reflect. (Write out how you feel or describe the current situation)
2. Use a "policy." (e.g. "I have a policy on not responding to emails after 6pm")
3. Ask yourself what you really want out of a situation or relationship. Are you able to state that clearly?
4. Notice where feelings of frustration and annoyance come up. (These indicate where your boundaries may be frayed.)
5. Identify your basic needs. (Are there things that you're not attending to like rest, daily chores or interests due to lack of boundaries?)
6. Clarify your values and intentions. Reminding yourself of why things matter to you helps.
7. Buy yourself time. (e.g. "Can I get back to you on that?" or "I'd love some more time to consider this.")

# COMMUNICATION OF BOUNDARIES:

Our boundaries will not set themselves. We have to do the work of maintaining and enforcing our boundaries with others. Understanding your **communication style** is important for learning how to set boundaries and communicate them effectively: There are four main communication styles:

- **Aggressive** *"i'm right and you're wrong"*
- **Passive** *"whatever you want to do"*
- **Assertive** *"we are both entitled to respect and choice"*
- **Passive aggressive** *"fine, i guess" (when it's really not fine)*

## TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING YOUR BOUNDARIES:

- **Use I statements**
  - *"I would prefer to use this email moving forward."*
- **Be concise** (use clear, simple language)
  - *"No, that is not something I can accommodate."*
- **Don't over explain or over-justify.**
  - *"I'm sorry I can't make it to your event, I won't be available".*
- **Be friendly and firm** (Express yourself civilly and openly)
  - *"Thank you, but I am currently not taking suggestions on this matter."*
- **Avoid using language that opens you up for further discussion.**
  - *e.g. DON'T say: "let me know if you need any more details" or "i'm happy to chat more if needed"*
- **If it feels appropriate, try to be a part of the solution.**
  - *"I'd love to help, but i'm not available. Let me direct you to X person who may be able to accommodate your request"*



# BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS + BOUNDARY ERRORS

**Boundary violations** are when others/ objects cross our boundaries after they have clearly been set or defined. This is different from a **boundary error**, which is an accidental boundary crossing out of ignorance.

*E.g. A boundary violation is after you've expressly asked to be addressed by your full name at work, and a colleague ignores this and continues to give you a pet name. A boundary error is if you introduce yourself to a new team and one of your new team members accidentally misspells it on a document.*

After a boundary violation, you may notice yourself feeling distrustful of others, disrespected, dismissed, invalidated, angry, upset or irritable. These are normal reactions to boundary violations. Pay attention to your emotional experiences. They can help you understand where and how your boundaries may have been crossed.

## COMMON BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS:

- Giving unsolicited advice.
- Venting/ emotional dumping.
- Emotional abuse/ verbal abuse.
- Going back on your word with no explanation. (ghosting, avoidance)
- Dismissing someone's lived experience or worldview.
- Ignoring/ devaluing your credentials and expertise.
- Extending meetings for longer than the allocated time.
- Not showing up when agreed upon. (meetings, dates, phone calls etc)
- Adding items to someone's to do list without checking in about their capacity.
- Not giving yourself enough time to rest.
- Not setting aside time energy to eat meals and snacks.

# SIGNS THAT YOUR BOUNDARIES ARE BEING TESTED/BROKEN

Don't know what to say or how to say it? Not sure what it looks like when your boundaries have been broken? It is common to feel confused when setting boundaries with others and things start to get complicated.

## When people do not respect your boundaries you may:

- feel frustrated, angry, guilty, uncomfortable, inferior, drained, ashamed, apathetic, distressed, afraid when communicating with them.
- justify their bad behaviour.
- doubt your decisions or distrust your own choices.
- be confused or overwhelmed when you speak to them.
- often feel exhausted emotionally or mentally after interactions with them.

## EXAMPLES OF BOUNDARIES YOU CAN SET WITH OTHERS:

“Please respect my decision in this matter. It's important to me that this limit is understood.”

“I am uncomfortable with what you just said. I would like to take the time to process before discussing it with you.”

“Can we change the subject? I would prefer to not get involved in conflict that doesn't directly involve me”

# LEADERSHIP + WORKPLACE CONSIDERATIONS

Boundaries in the workplace begin with leadership and systems. Modelling a healthy relationship with yourself and your boundaries is integral for holistic leadership and healthy collaboration. Understanding the dynamic of your team, setting relevant frameworks and workflows that respect others limits, sets a foundation for boundary setting to be a natural and intuitive way of working together.

Below are some important considerations for leadership and team management when it comes to setting boundaries, managing boundary violations and creating collaborative boundaries with your colleagues in the workplace.

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TIPS:

- Not everyone will want to share their lives with you. It's okay to ask, but respect your employee's limits.
- Talk openly about your values, priorities and boundaries. Your team cannot respect them if you don't verbalize them.
- Leadership needs to start the conversation on boundaries. You create the culture of how often, when and where boundaries at the workplace should be discussed.
- Power dynamics need to be named. Leaders and supervisors should articulate and understand where power and control plays a role in workflow. This is an exercise in deep self reflection. Where do you create the most influence or have the most power? Share these insights with your team as necessary to demonstrate insight and dispel harmful expectations around boundaries.
- If you need to set a hard limit or time boundary around a project, communicate this clearly and with regularity. Your employees should not be confused about the limits that are inflexible and beyond your capacity to change.
- Make space for mental health in action not just words. If you want employees to take vacation days, don't make it impossible for them to do so. Take the perspective of a team member and check in on them honestly about space for appropriate rest.



# SECTION

# TWO

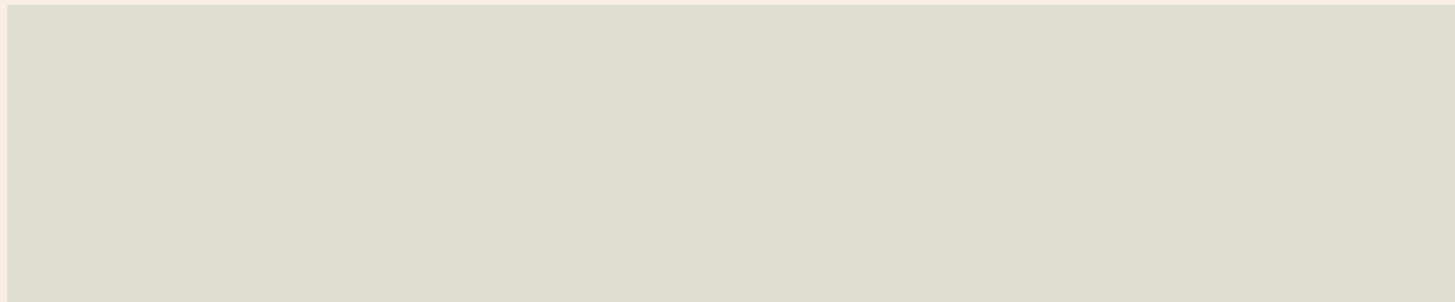
*Exercises & Prompts:*

*Use this section to explore more about  
your own boundaries and limits.*

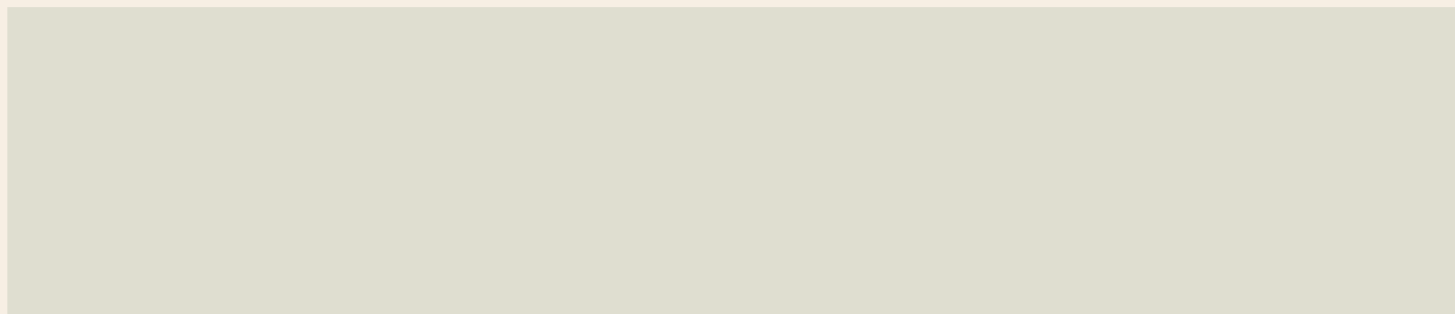


# JOURNAL PROMPTS

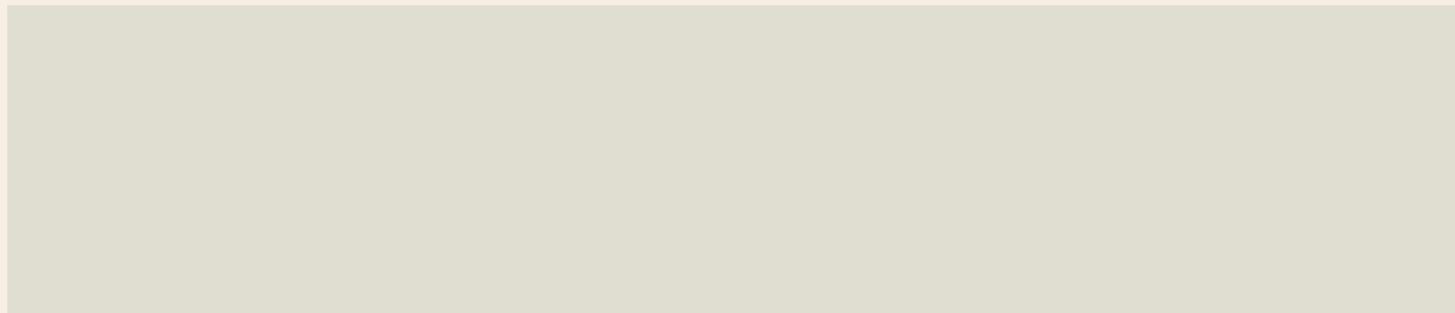
Do I feel safe discussing my boundaries and limits with others in my life?



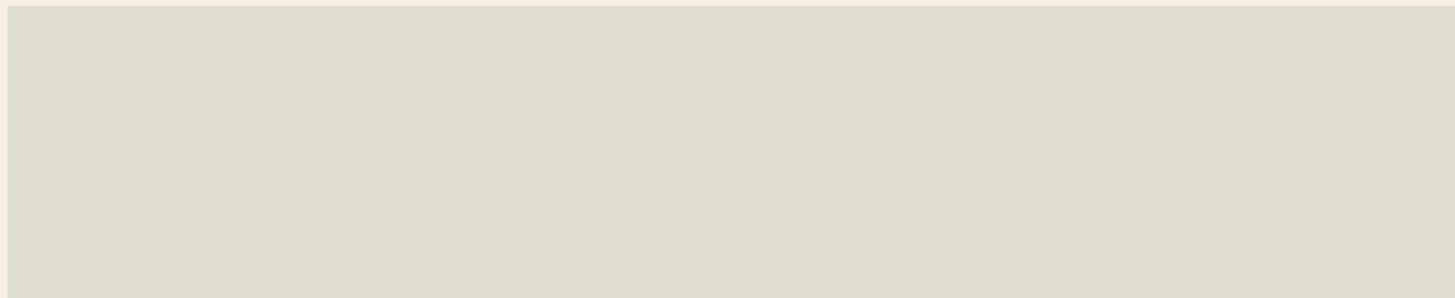
Where does the impact of not having boundaries show up in my life? What do I notice about this?



What barriers or limitations do I notice within myself when unlearning beliefs around asserting myself?



Are there beliefs that I hold about my abilities, strengths or future success that are limited by my struggles with boundaries?



# Rest, healing and boundaries

Our normal day-to-day experiences in work, relationships and the external world can be exhausting mentally, emotionally and physically. Setting boundaries and understanding your limits can truly only be achieved through the self trust, practicing assertiveness, and learning to approach conflict with intention. However, prioritizing rest can allow us to process and restore ourselves when we feel too tired to set limits with others.

*Use this space to explore your relationship with boundaries around rest.*

When do you allow yourself to truly take time to rest?

What barriers (external or internal) prevent you from prioritizing rest?

What needs to happen in your life in order to focus on restoring your energy?

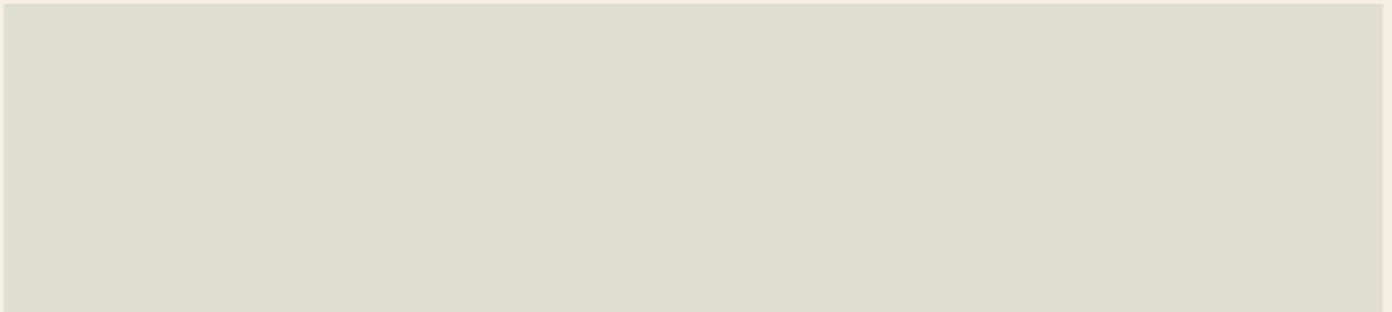
# Practice setting boundaries

Our worlds both online and offline can feel like they are inundated with ideas, opinions, news and information without any time or space to process, make sense of, or integrate what we're taking in.

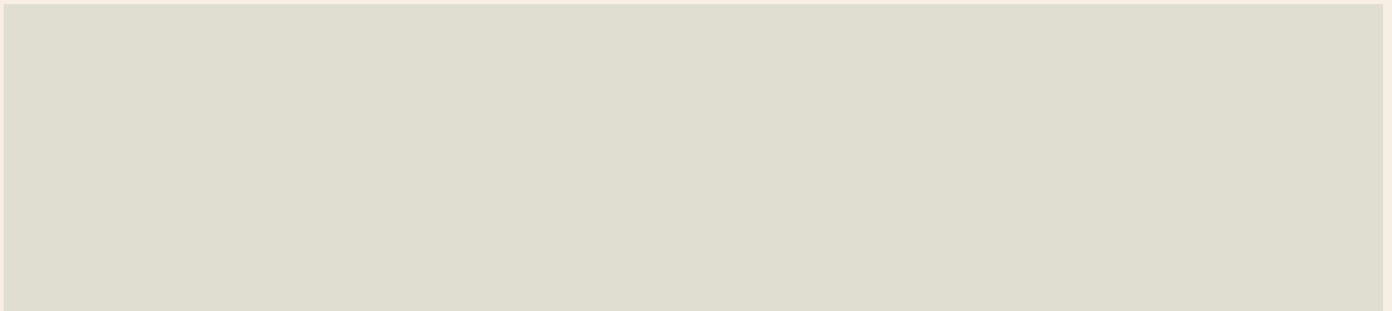
Being mindful and protective of when, where and with whom we share our time energy and care is important in our daily lives.

*Explore your own boundaries here. Be as general or as specific as it feels helpful.*

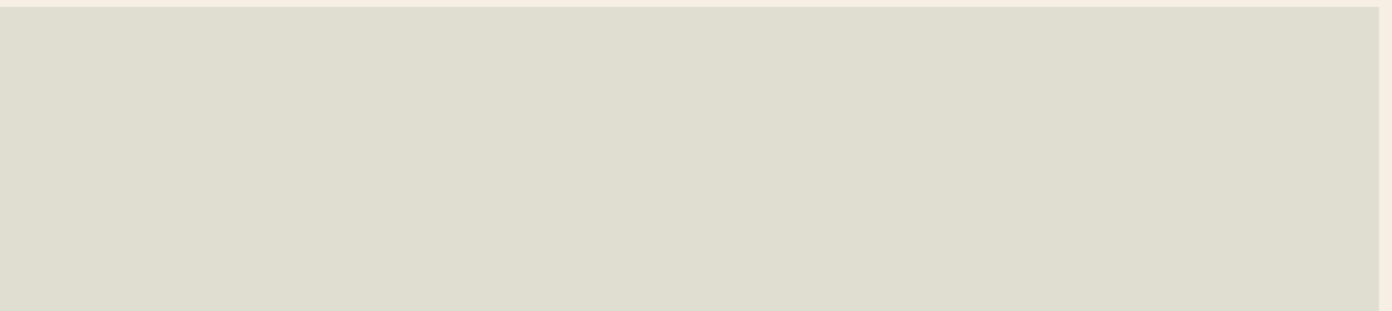
My boundaries with my time are:



My boundaries with my energy and resources are:



My boundaries around self care are:

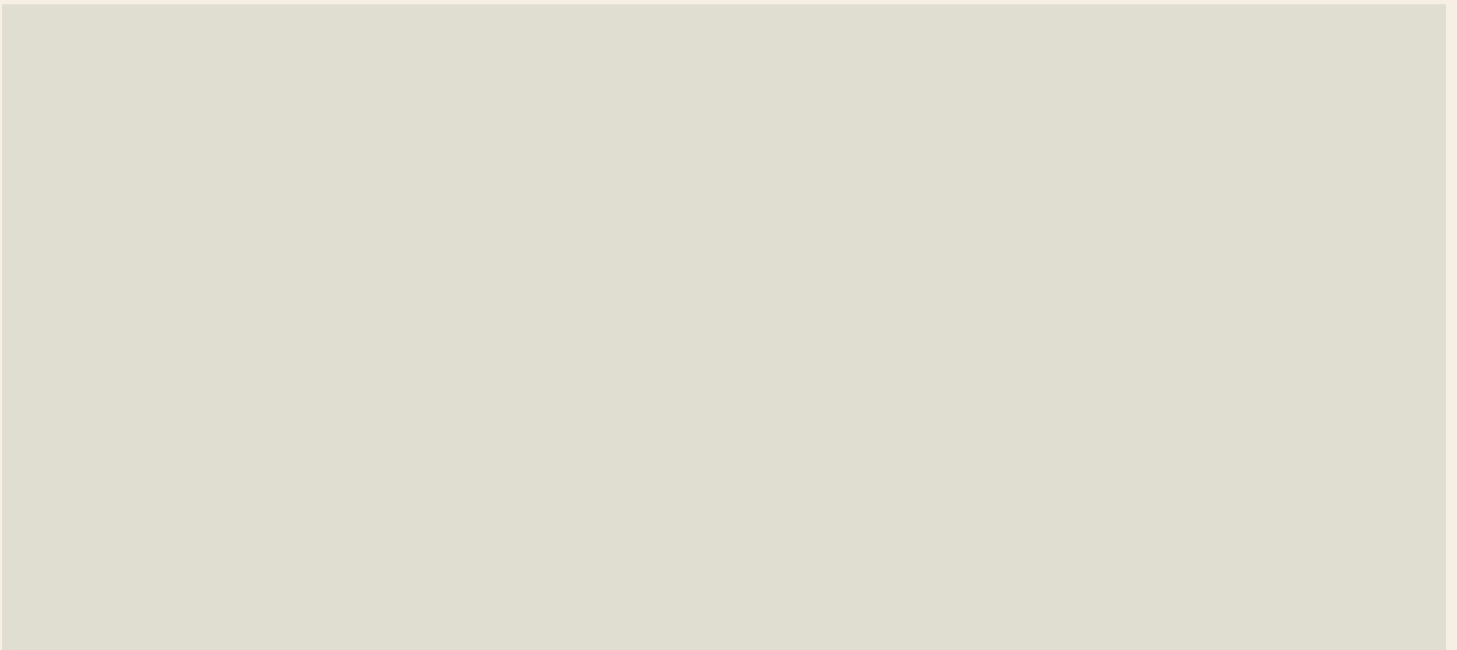


# Boundaries + Self Care

After setting boundaries, you may feel fear, guilt or shame. This is normal. You may realize that setting boundaries with others is necessary and important for your mental health.

Post-boundary self-care helps you avoid burnout and replenish your internal resources. Setting boundaries with others can be a stressful and emotionally exhausting process when you first begin. Create a post boundary self care routine to manage the stress after setting limits with yourself and others.

**After I set boundaries with myself or others, I take care of myself by...**



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