

Springing into Boundaries

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The professional learning team at the NSTU hopes these days are treating you well. The focus in February 2024 was on the book *Setting Boundaries, Find Peace* by Nedra Glover-Tawaab. This month, we would like to share the companion to that resource, *The Setting Boundaries Workbook* to invite to you take a different look at how you can support strengthening your boundaries both inside and outside of your learning spaces.

We are working on developing an entire workshop around setting boundaries to support you on your path of discerning—discerning how much of your energy you are going to direct towards the different “asks” that are placed on you every single day. Let’s take a look at some resources that can help you recognize what a break could mean for you.

Although this workbook doesn’t speak entirely to work demands, there is a section that does propose some ideas. Let’s start with the YOU @ work first. Let’s look at how we can tell if we need to review our current boundaries. Tawaab calls this, “knowing the signs”. As you look at this list, try your best to not let yourself stay in the discomfort for too long. Try to notice, without judgement, the circumstances you might be facing.

Do you find yourself...

- neglecting self-care
- feeling overwhelmed
- avoiding interactions with others
- always being the helper, never being helped
- unable to say no
- unable to ask for help
- having difficulty allowing others to help you
- doing things with no support

Two important pieces around setting boundaries to keep in mind:

First: **practicing how to sit with discomfort.** It’s part of the process and we need to let it breathe—but not for too long. Take some deep, slow breaths and name to yourself:

Are you feeling more centered?

Hold yourself accountable.

This can be a challenge! Try not to let your mind talk you OUT of the process. Try to push through the discomfort of speaking up, reflecting and reclaiming time for yourself. You might lean on someone in your circle of support to help hold you accountable, like a wellness buddy. Much like a workout buddy, this can be someone you check in with



to see how things are going. You can ask, do you need an ear? Do you need a brainstorming/problem-solving conversation? If you disrespect your own boundary, try to get back on track by thinking about how it made you feel and what you could do differently next time.

Let’s look at some tools for setting boundaries. The Setting Boundaries workbook contains exercises and activities that are very doable. I have started using the word doable instead of easy. This change in language can allow us to flip the script and shift our mindset towards what is possible.

Here is Tawwab’s step-by-step guide for setting boundaries and some resources/tools that can help you on your boundary journey.

Identify where you need a boundary	Journal: write, draw, sketch
Define your boundary	What do you NOT want to see, hear or do?
Trust your intuition	What is your ‘gut’ telling you?
Say no	“No” is a complete sentence; no explanations needed. Tawwab offers a visual resource on different ways to say no .
Be assertive	This can be challenging; try to stand strong in your power. You are not responsible for someone’s reaction. As Tawwab notes, a reaction can indicate how much a boundary is needed.
Define consequences	Make sure to address boundary violations <i>as they happen</i> .
Let go of guilt	When you say no to someone or something else, you are saying yes to yourself.
Use support	Rely on the people in your circle of support. Your boundary practice can inspire others.

Setting boundaries at the workplace can be challenging. We recognize that. If you have a situation where your boundaries at work are in question, please reach out to your Executive Staff Officer in member services.

Take your own Boundary quiz [HERE](#).

We hope that you find this article and related resources helpful to you in your self-care journey. Please don’t hesitate to reach out with your questions to: appl@nstu.ca.