

SETTING BOUNDARIES:

TIPS ON RADICAL SELF-CARE
FOR CREATIVES



By Koko Brown

PAPER ARTS

WHAT ARE YOUR BOUNDARIES?

Boundaries are not walls, they do not separate or form a barrier between you and another person. Instead boundaries act as connection points, they provide healthy rules and guidance for navigating personal or professional relationships.

To me, boundaries are an open communication of how you treat yourself and how you expect others to treat you.

A professional boundary might be something like 'I don't take work calls after 6pm' or 'I don't allow companies to pay me less than £££ per day' or 'I don't answer emails in bed'.

What do your boundaries look like? Here are some prompts guide you:

I feel comfortable / happiest / most able to work productively when... *	To work at my best I need...	I will honor my needs by...
e.g. My work doesn't interfere with my personal time	e.g. A clear schedule of when I will and won't be working	e.g. Letting people I know my working hours and switching off my laptop at the end of my work day

* You can also replace this with 'I feel uncomfortable / unhappy / less able to work productively when. '

HOW DO YOU SET BOUNDARIES WITH YOURSELF?

This isn't about you, this is about *future* you.

You set boundaries now to ensure that future you is safe and cared for in the best way possible. Using the prompts above, you may have a better idea of what your boundaries look like. Now is a good time to turn these into:

CLEAR AND UNAMBIGUOUS STATEMENTS.

E.g. "I will work on this project between 16th - 29th."

"I don't allow people to use my equipment without me being present."

"I am happy to have meetings between 11am - 5pm on Monday."

"I won't work with people who raise their voice at me."

What are your clear and unambiguous boundaries?

Nobody said it was easy.

Sometimes, when we're the only ones watching, it's easy to push our boundaries to the side.

How do you know you're respecting your own boundaries?

What can you put in place to ensure you are doing this?

How do you check in with yourself?

HOW DO YOU SET BOUNDARIES WITH OTHER PEOPLE?

Be firm.

You've set your boundaries for a reason. People may try to push them but remember:

Healthy boundaries are set to make sure you are physically, mentally and emotionally, safe.

If a company or person doesn't respect that, be prepared to communicate your boundary again.

Do you need to be clearer or more concise?

How many times are you willing to communicate this boundary?

Sometimes being firm doesn't work, so you'll need to...

Find a way to say no.

Saying no as an artist or freelancer can sometimes feel super scary.

"If I say no, will I get this opportunity again?" "Will I be able to pay my bills?" "What if this is my big break?"

But sometimes it's necessary. Common reasons artists and freelancers have to say no include:

- Unpaid work
- Low fees
- Working overtime
- Creating more than agreed

How do you say no?

What language works for you?

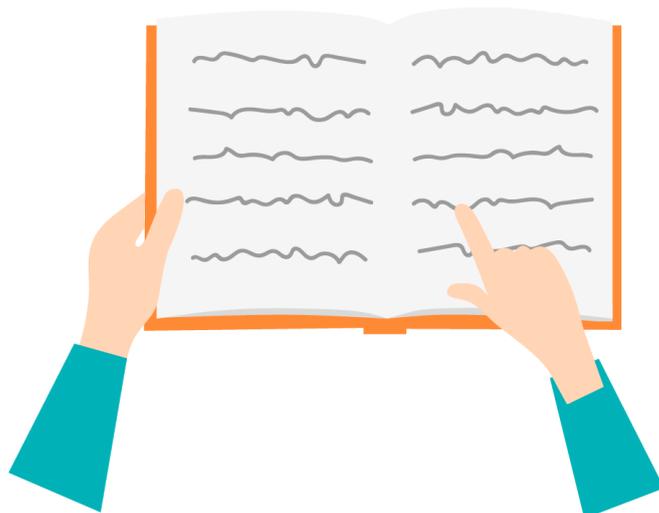
How do you communicate this?

HOW DO YOU SET BOUNDARIES WITH OTHER PEOPLE?

I set a boundary in my email signatures, so that people looking to work with me know where I stand from the beginning. At the moment you'll find "I enjoy having a roof over my head so I currently work for money and not exposure."

Get support

Who in your network can support you when a boundary has been crossed? This could be someone that can offer professional advice, someone who can offer support in a meeting or someone who can offer a safe space for you to talk about how you feel. Identify these people because they can be key.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Some boundaries are flexible.

As you discover your boundaries, think about how they work in different situations.

Is there flexibility?

What does this flexibility depend on?

Does this serve you?

Have a plan B.

If someone continually crosses your boundary, what will you do? What is your plan B?

Check in with yourself

Take the time to check in with yourself.

Are your boundaries still serving you?

Do they need to be re-thought or re-evaluated?

still serve you and where your career is at right now.

