Boundaries: When Saying No to Others Means Saying Yes to Yourself

Alice Roberts, CSW
Wasatch Family Therapy
Bountiful & Cottonwood Heights Offices
801-944-4555
http://www.wasatchfamilytherapy.com/archives/doctor/alice-roberts

“A boundary is simply what’s okay and what’s not okay” ~ Brene Brown

* Clear boundaries allow us to spend time & energy on the things that matter most to us.
* Clear boundaries help us avoid resentment or burn out.
* Clear boundaries do not mean we are selfish.
* Clear boundaries are an act of love for ourselves and those around us.

*We can identify where we need boundaries in our lives by looking for areas where we act out of fear, guilt, or where we feel resentment.

How to say no in 3 easy steps:
1. Plan ahead: think of easy to use phrases.
2. Don’t explain: explanations give others the ability to adjust their request.
3. Offer an alternative (if you want to): is there an alternative that you feel good about?

Exercise
A secondary emotion is when you feel something about a feeling itself. These are reactive, surface level emotions. Example: You may feel anger, resentment, or you may shut down when you have been hurt. The anger, resentment, or withdrawal is the reaction to the primary emotion, which is the hurt (sadness or fear).

Think of a time when you struggled with setting a boundary. How did you feel? Name the secondary (surface level) emotions you experienced. Now think about the underlying emotion (the primary emotion). Understanding the underlying emotion can help us be proactive in setting boundaries, because we have identified the vulnerable part of ourselves. Being vulnerable with ourselves helps us be gentler and kinder and more resolute in setting healthy boundaries. “I responded to this situation with (insert secondary emotion), I responded that way because I felt (insert primary emotion). I can set boundaries to respect and support myself. These boundaries will help me interact with others in more compassionate ways because I will not get caught up in (insert secondary emotion).”