

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 34: EVALUATING BOUNDARIES

What do a beach house and a bed of coals have to do with evaluating boundaries? Keep listening!

Welcome to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. This is the place to hear about how you can pair the emerging brain science about why you binge with powerful life coaching to help you stop. If you want to explore a non-clinical approach to end binge eating, you're in the right place. It's time to free yourself. You have more power than you know. And now, your host, Life and Weight-Loss Coach Martha Ayim.

Welcome to Episode 34 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*.

In the last episode, I asked you to think about a specific boundary you might want to set. Remember, personal and emotional boundaries define what you will and won't tolerate for your own safety and well-being. I asked you to consider:

What would indicate that your boundary had been crossed?

How might you articulate your boundary to another person?

What action would you be willing to take as a consequence if the person crosses your boundary?

What fears (if any) do you have around establishing this boundary or around invoking the consequence?

And, lastly, what might be the benefits of establishing this boundary?

These questions are a good place to start to clarify the specifics of a boundary.

But you may want to consider going beyond understanding and clarifying boundaries to evaluating boundaries.

This kind of work involves exploring whether you're setting your boundary from a place of peace and from regard for yourself and others. This kind of work involves pondering whether you're enforcing your boundary from a place of peace and from regard for yourself and others. And this kind of work involves ensuring you're not confusing a boundary with a manual.

When I ask you whether you've set your boundary from a place of peace and from a place of self-regard and regard for others, you may have an idea of what I'm up to if you've listened to Episode 18 on mental hygiene.

Now, don't worry, I'm not going to throw a pop quiz or anything like that. But you might remember that in that episode we talked about finding out what you're currently thinking, evaluating whether those thoughts are actually serving you, and, if necessary, choosing new thoughts that *will* serve you.

In Episode 18, I recommended doing a five-minute thought-jot—that is, taking five minutes to write down what you're thinking about something, if it's not immediately obvious to you. And don't beat yourself up if you're not clear on what you're thinking about something.

Our brains are thinking thoughts constantly and we're only aware of a fraction of those thoughts. Part of our work is about increasing awareness of our thoughts. So be patient with yourself and give yourself permission to be exactly where you are on your journey. You'll get better with practice.

And if you don't need to journal to access your thoughts about something, that's fine, too.

But either way—whether you need to write down your thoughts or not—I want you to remember that you are not your thoughts, you are not defined by your thoughts, you are the *witness* of your thoughts.

So, as you're either mentally acknowledging or physically writing your thoughts, try not to get caught up in any drama contained within the thoughts themselves.

Let's get back to the example of Blaine, the hypothetical man of the last couple of episodes who keeps calling and texting even after you've said, "No, thank you," to the offer of a date.

In last week's scenario, Blaine called Friday night and left a voice message inviting you out for dinner the next day. Then, on Saturday afternoon, he texted to see if you got his voicemail. Now, you were clear that this wasn't okay with you—in *your* mind anyway—and that your boundary had been crossed. You also figured out how you'd communicate that to Blaine and that the consequence would be that you'd block his number if he did it again.

Suppose you do a thought jot about your boundary with Blaine and it opens like this:

I'm not going on that date with Blaine because of that last dude. I swore up and down, "Never again!" I mean, I said, "Oh, *hell* no!" Blaine might be as absent as Reggie was no matter how hard I tried to be present. I'm putting up this boundary because I'm not taking a chance on another XY chromosome. It is too bloody risky. Reggie ripped my heart out and I've got nothin' for nobody else. Even though . . . I have to say, I kind of like Blaine. He seems real and his awkwardness makes him human and not super-smooth like a salesman.

Okay, so, that's the first step—finding out what you're currently thinking. Now, that was only a one-minute thought jot and I'd say we already have a fairly clear sense of what's behind this boundary.

So, now we're on to the second step—evaluating whether your thoughts are serving you. How would you know if you're thoughts are serving you? Well, when you think a thought like, "I'm not taking a chance" or "I've got nothin' for nobody," how do you feel? My guess is you feel scared, powerless, and closed.

If you don't want your life run by a sense of fear, disempowerment, and narrowness, then it's time to move on to the third step—choosing new thoughts that *will* serve you.

I'm wondering if you might consider these as alternative thoughts: "Things didn't work out with Reggie as I'd hoped. That was partly due to him and I can take responsibility for the part that was due to me. I learned a lot, and I'm open to believing that my experience and clarity about what I really want in a relationship, combined with the coaching skills I'm learning now, make it more possible for me to navigate a healthy partnership."

Do these thoughts serve you any better? Well, let's see. When you think a thought like, "I can take responsibility" and "I'm open to believing that one day I can navigate a healthy partnership," how do you feel? My guess is you feel calmer, clearer, and more compassionate.

Do you see what I mean about the difference it makes when you set a boundary from a place of peace and regard?

Now, none of this means that you still don't set a boundary with Blaine if that's what you really want to do! It just means that you set it from a calm place of thoughts and feelings that serve you rather than from a hot mess of thoughts and feelings that don't. It's kind of like the difference between trying sleep with the sound of waves lapping outside your beach house versus trying to sleep on a searing bed of coals.

So, if you're feeling angry, frustrated, resistant, or other such emotions, work through those emotions and try to get to a space of peace and regard before you do boundary work.

It's worth considering that the reason you're upset may have less to do with someone violating your boundary and more to do with the fact that you may not have been setting proper boundaries in the first place. In other words, you may not have been speaking the truth. When you can own that and take responsibility for your emotions and actions, you can do boundary work from a cleaner place.

And when you have a boundary conversation, don't be afraid to share that you're doing this out of compassion. Remember, in the last episode, we contemplated saying something to Blaine like, "Listen, Blaine, I think you're a lovely guy and I was flattered by your offer of a date; I just don't want to go out on one. Thanks again for the invitation, but it's important to me that you honor my answer by not calling or texting anymore. And if you don't stop, I'm going to block your number. This has nothing to do with you. It's about me and what I need right now to take care of myself."

When you communicate boundaries out of regard for yourself *and* the other person, you can tell the person the truth without attacking or blaming at them. Your truth has nothing to do with them, which you can say when you set or enforce the boundary. If they choose to be hurt or upset, that's coming from

what they're making your boundary mean. That is their responsibility to work through as long as you have approached the boundary from a clean place.

The beauty of this is that it creates the possibility of moving forward in relationships from a place of authenticity and love while leaving behind the shackles of resistance and fear. Relationships become genuine and intimate when you're willing to do this work.

So far, we've talked about setting a boundary from a place of peace and regard. Now we're going to talk about *enforcing* a boundary from a place of peace and regard.

Sometimes people continue to violate boundaries because in the past you haven't had any, so they keep doing what they've always done. For example, it's possible that you feel Blaine has been violating your boundary for a long time if you continued to allow it without saying anything. And it's possible that Blaine didn't know that he was doing that. But when you begin to consistently honor yourself by following through on your boundaries, that will change for you. So, give yourself and other people time to adjust.

Now, I get it. Following through with a consequence if your boundary has been crossed is difficult for many people. As we talked about last time, we often fear how others will react. But failure to follow through on the consequence sends the message that the boundary doesn't really exist. Furthermore, you'll probably fester in disappointment, torment, and judgment, and slowly but surely build yourself a wall of resistance around this person. This does not foster closeness or intimacy and this does not come from authenticity. Rather, this causes unnecessary drama, pain, and conflict, which the other person may have no clue that they're contributing to.

When you enforce a boundary from a place of calm and compassion, the tone changes. For example, if you bump into Blaine and he says, "Hey! Why did you block my number?!" you can be furious that he even asked you that question and spit out, "What the hell? I set a clear boundary, and you're still talking to me?! Look, I told you not to stop calling and texting. You didn't stop, so I had to block you. I mean, I don't even know why you're calling me." Or you could say, "I understand how you're feeling. I want to remind you, though, that I talked to you about this before. This is the boundary I'm honoring. I'm flattered that you want to go out for dinner, but it's just not something that I'm ready for now."

You don't have to blame or shame. In the end, that rarely feels good anyway. And you don't have to make a boundary violation mean that someone's completely wrong. When you do that, you're probably not really taking care of anyone because it's probably not the truth.

What you can do, instead, is take care of you. This will leave you in a space where you don't have to be tormented and resistant, where you can be yourself, she can be herself, he can be himself.

The third part of evaluating boundaries is ensuring you're not confusing a boundary with a manual.

Many people do this. For example:

- I wish my girlfriend would eat the way I want to eat.
- I want my roommate to stop buying ice cream.

- I wish my office colleagues would stop bringing in donuts.

In these scenarios, the person is not violating your personal or physical space—in other words, they're not infringing on your rights—by not honoring your request. So, these technically aren't boundary issues and they don't require you to impose a consequence. These requests fall under the definition of the manual—the rulebooks we have for others—that we talked about a few episodes ago.

It's okay to make requests of people. So, for example, you could ask your roommate if she'd be open to not bringing ice cream into your apartment. But just be cautious. Remember, what we learned in the episodes on having rules for others is that when your happiness depends on other people fulfilling your request, you could have a problem. Why? Because you can't expect to control other people. And the good news is that you don't have to.

This work is not about manipulating someone else's behavior. It's not about expecting them to change for your sake. It's about taking emotional responsibility regardless of what someone does. If you need a refresher on how to navigate manuals, go back and re-listen to the episodes on having rules for others.

So . . . are you ready to do boundary work?

Well, as we've discussed, if you're not coming from a place of peace and regard, it's not an ideal time to set or enforce a boundary. If you're trying to manipulate someone else's behavior for your own benefit to avoid having to do your own emotional work, or if you're blaming, negative, and simply trying to delete someone from your life, consider taking some time to ponder boundary work further.

The desire to delete people who trigger something painful in you is understandable, but it's not a boundary issue. Instead, consider the idea that the people who trigger you the most can be your greatest teachers. It's possible that those who set us off are able to do so because we haven't yet learned how to set proper boundaries with them.

Simply removing that person from your life is the easy option. But then you miss an opportunity to understand when you truly end and where they begin. Finding out the answer to that may start by asking yourself, "What can I learn from this relationship?" Or, "How can I navigate this relationship as an opportunity to take care of myself, to create real authenticity, and to speak a real truth?"

When boundaries come from a place of love, they promote self-regard and regard for others, they promote connection and intimacy that feels right.

Do you want to live your life excising people for reasons that sound authentic? Or is that more like desperately trying to drug symptoms away, when one option might be to look for the cause?

It may feel like freedom. But I wonder if it really is.

Is it possible that freedom is about learning to talk so you don't have to run?

When you set boundaries from the beginning, or start to set them as soon as you realize you need them, you get the option of a closeness and intimacy that doesn't set you on edge.

And, less and less, will you find that you need to reach for the Delete button, the distance, the termination, the coldness, the fear, the avoidance.

You may not need that deserted island after all.

On the mainland may be possibility and wonder you've never explored and never experienced.

Think about it—from a place of love, not from a place of fear.

Rowing back to shore, even for a time in a turbulent sea, may actually bring to closer to what you seek.

That's it for Episode 34. Thank you for listening. If you've been subscribed to this podcast for a while, you've probably tried and are probably tired of spending every day trying to figure out your bingeing or overeating. When I reached out to a life coach, I had no idea how my life would change. Coaching taught me that I had more power than I knew. And I when I took it back, I evolved in ways I never imagined. I showed up in ways I never expected. I achieved things I never thought possible. In a way, I stepped into my life for the first time. And I never looked back. It's why I'm so passionate about what I do. And it's why I've created the Done Bingeing Group Coaching Program, to offer access to coaching at a lower price point. So, if you're ready to take the next step in your journey to end your struggle with bingeing or overeating, go to www.holdingthespace.co/group-programs and reserve your spot today!

Thanks for listening to *The Done Bingeing Podcast*. Martha is a certified life and weight loss coach who's available to help you stop bingeing. Book a free session with her at www.holdingthespace.co/book. And stay tuned for next week's episode on freeing yourself from binge eating and creating the life you want.