



**Courage
and
Connection**

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INSTRUCTOR

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Boundaries

In many ways, September feels like the busiest time of the year: The kids go back to school, work piles up after the summer's dog days and Thanksgiving is suddenly upon us. But as our calendars swell with obligations, it's important to recommit to one thing that can help keep us sane: boundaries.

The moment someone asks you to do something you don't have the time or inclination to do is fraught with vulnerability. "Yes!" often seems like the easiest way out. But it comes at a price: I can't tell you how many times I've said "Sure!" in my squeaky, I-can't-believe-I'm-doing-this voice, only to spend hours, even months, feeling angry and resentful. For women, there's a myth that we're supposed to do it all (and do it perfectly). Saying no cues a chorus of inner shame gremlins: "Who do you think you are?" "You're not a very caring [mother/wife/friend/colleague]."

Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others. We can't base our own worthiness on others' approval (and this is coming from someone who spent years trying to please everyone!). Only when we believe, deep down, that we *are* enough can we say "Enough!"

The Dare

- **Make a mantra.** I need something to hold on to—literally—during those awkward moments when an ask hangs in the air. So I bought a silver ring that I spin while silently repeating, "Choose discomfort over resentment." My mantra reminds me that I'm making a choice that's critical for my well-being—even if it's not easy.
- **Keep a resentment journal.** Whenever I'm marching around muttering cuss words under my breath, I grab what I lovingly refer to as my Damn It! Diary and write down what's going on. I've noticed that I'm most resentful when I'm tired and overwhelmed—i.e., not setting boundaries.
- **Rehearse.** I'll often say, to no one in particular, "I can't take that on" or "My plate is full." Like many worthwhile endeavors, boundary setting is a practice.

Brené Brown, PhD, researches vulnerability, shame, courage and worthiness at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work.

It is not the critic who counts;
not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles,
or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.
The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,
whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood;
who strives valiantly;
who errs,
who comes short again and again,
because there is no effort without error and shortcoming;
but who does actually strive to do the deeds;
who knows great enthusiasms,
the great devotions;
who spends himself in a worthy cause;
who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement,
and who at the worst,
if he fails,
at least fails **while daring greatly,**
so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls
who neither know victory nor defeat.