

The Done Bingeing

PODCAST

EPISODE 33: CLARIFYING BOUNDARIES

What do a flaming torch and a Delete button have to do with clarifying 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 33 of *The Done Bingeing Podcast*.

In the last episode, I asked you to think about what your boundaries are. Remember violations to personal and emotional boundaries are events that jeopardize your safety or well-being. I asked you these questions:

Is it okay with you if someone repeatedly calls you "fatty"?

Is it okay with you if Blaine keeps calling and texting even after you've said, "No, thank you," to the offer of a date?

Is it okay with you if your kids demand that you buy junk food when you don't want junk food in your home?

Is it okay with you if your partner tells you what to eat?

Is it okay with you if your mom loads your plate with seconds when you've said you're done?

Is it okay with you if your friend stops calling every time you lose weight, because she likes to be the thin one?

Now, just because I asked these questions doesn't mean that they're, by definition, boundary issues.

For example, you might be totally okay if your kids demand that you buy junk food because you might have a thought like, "It's normal that kids in our culture with our social and commercial influences would constantly ask for junk food."

On the other hand, you might be done with the cognitive real estate it takes for you to stay calm with their daily requests for Cheetos. That feeling of being done might come from a thought like, “In my home, it’s important to me that I present another option to the dominant food messages my kids see and hear.”

The whole point of this exercise is to determine what’s okay and what’s not okay *for you*.

There’s no right or wrong here. Different people will have different boundaries.

Now, not having any boundaries is probably going to start feeling a little trampled . . . kind of like a doormat.

Having boundaries everywhere is probably going to start feeling a little claustrophobic . . . kind of like being enclosed in a fence, bordered by a wall, encircled by a partition, surrounded by a barrier, bounded by a roadblock—I think you get the idea.

Keep these both of these ends of the continuum in mind as you find what feels right for you along the spectrum.

In the last episode, I also asked you to make a list of interactions with others that you dreaded, or that made your skin crawl—the kind of dynamics that weren’t resolved with the work we did on letting go of rulebooks for others. Did you have a chance to do that?

If so, what did you find out about where your line in the sand needs to be drawn?

The reason that question matters is because in this episode, we’re going to spend some time understanding how to set boundaries and how to communicate a boundary with another person.

Once you understand your boundaries, you’ll know when there’s been a violation. Or vice versa, when someone’s cross a line, you’ll know you need to clarify a boundary.

Remember, boundaries are a way for you to take care of and protect yourself and your space. Boundaries clarify what you will allow in your life and what you’re not willing to expose yourself to. Boundaries aren’t something you create for others. You create boundaries. But interestingly, as we’ll see later, healthy boundaries often enhance connection with others, even though this might seem counter-intuitive.

Let’s look at the example with Blaine. One of your boundaries might be that it is *not* okay with you if he keeps calling and texting even after you’ve said, “No, thank you,” to the offer of a date. Now, it’s Friday night and Blaine calls at 8:23 pm, leaving a voice message inviting you out for dinner tomorrow. Then, at 1:02 pm on Saturday, he texts to see if you got his voicemail.

So, your boundary has been crossed. Now what?

Well, it’s time to communicate to Blaine that he’s crossed a boundary. Remember, we’re not looking to manipulate Blaine or control his behavior. Why? Because we can’t control other people.

Who can you control? *You*.

So, you're going to communicate what *you* will do if Blaine doesn't stop calling and texting.

Think of it this way. If gal named Sally started digging for oil on your front lawn, you wouldn't go out there, fall on your knees and wail, "Please, oh please, stop digging, it's hurting me so much because I just had the landscapers here and the beauty of the plants was bringing me much needed serenity and now you're gonna ruin my tranquility if you don't stop."

What would you say instead? Well, you'd probably go out and say something like, "Listen, Sally, this is private property. Please stop digging, and if you don't I'm going to call the police."

What you've done with Sally is articulate a consequence that *you* will take if your boundary is crossed further. You didn't try to manipulate Sally into changing her behavior.

Similarly, you might consider 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 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."

By saying this, you're letting Blaine know that he's crossed a boundary and what action you'll take if he continues. *You* are the one who will take action if a consequence is necessary. *You* stay empowered.

Sometimes, that's all a person needs to hear to respect your boundary.

Sometimes, that's not enough, and they cross the boundary again. In that case, you take action as promised.

Again, sometimes that's the end of the boundary violation, sometimes not. If someone continues to cross your boundary once you take action, you'll need to continue to take action or to take a different action.

You may come across a situation where another person doesn't want you to set a boundary with them. Now, that has everything to do with them and nothing to do with you. They're having a feeling about you setting a boundary, which is coming from a thought they're thinking about you setting a boundary.

Notice that when you understand another person's behavior in this way, you don't *have* to make them wrong or bad for their actions. They get to be human and messy, kind of like you and I are human and messy, too.

Now, that doesn't mean that you have to tolerate their actions. It just means that you can set a boundary and follow through on it without passing judgment on another person.

Why might that be helpful? Well, because feeling judgmental can feel kind of rough, and sometimes descends into righteousness and blame that, in turn, pecks away at the personal responsibility and emotional empowerment you're cultivating.

So, for example, you don't have to make Blaine wrong or bad for continuing to call and text. Maybe Blaine is thinking a thought like, "I was so nervous when I asked her out the first time, I probably came across pretty goofy. Hopefully I can have another chance to connect and I can be more of my real self." A thought like this might leave Blaine feeling a little desperate, which is leading him to continue to call and text.

Now, we don't know for sure what's going on for Blaine, but being open to an interpretation of his behavior that doesn't make him wrong might ease some of your emotions as you contemplate your boundary.

And, as I said, regardless of what's going on for Blaine, that doesn't force you to accept behavior that's not okay for you. Do you see what I mean?

When you don't make a boundary crossing necessarily mean something bad about another person, it allows you to keep your response precise—you're responding to a specific action that you want to change, and you're not necessarily resorting to removing someone entirely from your life. You may not need to press the Delete button, after all.

Remember, a boundary isn't an ultimatum. It's not a way of controlling another person so you can feel better. This never works, and it's completely disempowering for you. And, I don't know if you've noticed, but people don't tend to like being controlled or forced, and when their actions are coming from a place of resentment, it's unlikely either of you will be happy with the result.

Ultimately, after you communicate a boundary crossing, you're giving someone the freedom to choose how they will behave and to be whom they want to be, while empowering yourself to protect your person and your emotions. You make a request, allow someone to choose how they respond, and then you follow through as needed.

Remember, you get to decide what to do about someone who's not respecting your boundary. You need to be ready to take the action you said you would—so make sure you communicate a consequence that you're actually willing to follow through on.

Not following through on a consequence sends the message that the boundary doesn't really exist and that even *you* don't take it seriously.

If you're hesitating on following through about your boundary, it may be because of how you imagine the other person will feel if you do. And so my guess is that you create a lot of drama in your mind about that. But when your boundary continues to get crossed, your frustration, anger, and resentment are likely to build. This doesn't foster healthy interactions, but rather creates drama of its own—not to mention conflict—which the other person may not even realize they're contributing to.

Now, we're going to be talking more about boundaries in the following episodes because it's so important to understand them thoroughly before implementing them. So, hang tight for next week's episode on evaluating your boundaries.

And one important note before I leave you with some questions to ponder for the week: Many personal or emotional boundaries don't involve threat of harm. But if they do and if you're in a situation where you're concerned for your safety, don't hesitate to get the help and support you need.

Now, here are some questions to consider:

What is a boundary that you want to set?

What would indicate that your boundary has been crossed?

How might you articulate your boundary to another person?

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

What are your fears (if any) around establishing this boundary or around invoking the consequence?

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

Now, I get that our discussion about defining, setting, communicating, and following through on boundaries might feel a little scary.

Maybe you fear getting torch-flamed by another person's anger if you dare to stand up for yourself.

Or maybe you fear the loss of someone who doesn't want you to set boundaries with them at all.

You can fear the drama in your mind invoked by imaging the worst scenario.

Or you can live in the drama in your life invoked by festering resentment of the status quo.

You can fear the loss of a soul you so desperately don't want to lose.

Or you can fear the loss of yourself.

Every fear will call upon you to discern and decide what's worth it for you and what you're worth yourself.

That's it for Episode 33. Thank you for listening. It's the new year. And whether you brought in with a binge before midnight and a diet after, my guess is that you still get urges. Maybe for candy bars. Maybe for ice cream. Maybe for popcorn. Maybe at the end of the day. Maybe at the beginning. Maybe at all points in-between. But they're there. And they seem to make you eat *against your own will*. Sometimes just a little. But mostly a whole lot. And then . . . you see it on your body and you feel it in your heart. You want to do better. Part of you thinks you can't. *But part of you knows you can*. If you're ready to take the next step in your journey to end your struggle with bingeing or overeating, you're going to want to check out my new group coaching program where we're going to study and apply the concepts in *The Done Bingeing Podcast* together. Stay tuned for details on how to sign up coming next week!

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.