Boundaries or Burnout?

- Boundaries come from the heart: you can’t be awesome when you are feeling sucked dry.
- It’s time to create your own personal culture so that people around you can thrive in your presence.
- You are no longer to define yourself as a nice and caring helper: People take advantage of nice and caring helpers.
- You are now a role model of a well-defined, balanced, personality. When I say well defined, I mean that you are consistent, you are not moody, and you do not show favoritism to anyone.
  - To be consistent you have to take care of yourself, and you have to maintain boundaries.
  - Remember- as a role model you are getting people familiar to the culture of you. You can’t do this if you aren’t consistent and you can’t do this if you are moody or show favoritism.

Here are the rules that help to create and maintain boundaries.

1) Actions must have consequences- If someone is being negative, angry, or manipulative around you...are you setting boundaries against it?
   a. Minimize interactions with people who are manipulative: Manipulation can be intentional or unintentional. You can be aware that you are being manipulated when you find yourself working harder to help or support a person than they are working to help or support themselves.
   b. Reinforce positive and adaptive self-help behaviors. Don’t forget to give good attention for good behaviors that are respectful of your boundaries.
   c. Example: A student come to talk to you about a roommate issue constantly but never follows a one of your suggestions to talk to the roommate about these concerns.

2) Ultimately, we are only responsible for that which we can control: We are responsible to each other, we are not responsible for each other. This means we refuse to be the rescuer or the enabler for somebody else’s irresponsible behavior.
a. If your role in life is only to help people who are struggling than you will feel empty if you are not constantly attached to needy people and unconsciously maintaining their neediness.
b. This is both enabling and co-dependency.
c. Example: If you feel that it is your fault that a friend who drinks too much goes to the hospital with alcohol poisoning.

3) Our power is limited, accept it: We have some power over some things, and not over others (we can’t change people).

   a. We can’t change or fix anyone who doesn’t want to change and fix themselves.
   b. You can change yourself at any time. That’s the power you do have. Often, when you change who you are in a healthy way, people who are close to you are forced to face themselves and will finally consider change.
   c. Example: If you are worried about a person you care about who smokes, you can choose not to go outside and stand with him when he is doing it.

4) Respect for all: If we want people to respect our boundaries, than we must respect theirs.

   a. Since you cannot change others you cannot demand that they must change who they are.
   b. You can enforce that their behavior is not acceptable around you or on the floor. This will mean that they can keep their behavior if they want, but they have to accept that they don’t have control over some of the ramifications of keeping that negative behavior.
      i. Losing the strength of their relationship with you.
      ii. Being kicked out of the dorms.
   c. Example: You cannot make another person not be racist, you can choose to share with him your opinion on the matter, choose not to listen to him talk like that, remind him that any intimidation on campus based on race will have real consequences.

5) Motivation comes from choice: We must be free to say “no” before we can whole-heartedly say “yes”.

   a. **Burnout often occurs after we have lost the ability to say “no” to people.**
   b. A yes is that much more sincere and powerful when we can honestly tell people “no” when we don’t feel we can do something. An honest “no” is 10 times healthier in any relationship than a regretted “yes”.
   c. Example: When a student states that they need to talk, and you need to study for a test in one hour, you should tell them that you would not be a good listener right now and that they will get the listener they deserve later when you are done with the test. If the student hears this and then says they are suicidal, you should get the student to the right person who can give the student the help they need. Again, the primary help for the student is not you because you stated that you are not available and the student
heard this. By the student then stating that he is suicidal it indicates that he needs help and it doesn’t matter if it is from your or not. You then appropriately connect him with somebody who can help. By doing this you have maintained your boundary and helped the student appropriate to what he or she is asking for and needs.

6) Re-evaluate boundaries: Keep checking your boundary fences that they are doing what they are supposed to do.
   a. Boundaries are supposed to help others respect you and grow from understanding where you stop and they begin.
   b. Boundaries are not supposed to be overly punitive, diminishing, or cause injury to those around us. If a boundary is inconsistent or shows favoritism this will occur.
   c. Example: If you notice that students don’t feel comfortable approaching you at any time then you may have created the wrong perception with the boundaries you are trying to establish. You must readjust, and again, remember to be transparent in altering your boundaries.

7) Boundaries are proactive and not reactive: When boundaries are not well thought out and implemented with thoughtful consideration and consistency we may implement them in a reactionary and uneven way.
   a. You will know you are reactionary when you become emotional in defense of a boundary.
   b. A good boundary is enforced as an open and transparent rule ahead of time and not as a whim of the moment.
   c. Example: It is not a student’s fault if he calls your room phone at 3 am if you never told him that he couldn’t do that and never shared with him the number for the on-call RA.

8) If you have envy or infatuation, your boundaries are in danger: Envious or infatuated people fail to set good boundaries because they aren’t focused on themselves, they are focused on that thing or person that they want.
   a. If you are attracted or overly admiring of someone on your floor you must be honest with yourself about this and understand that this may hinder your ability to be consistent and fair in maintaining your personal boundaries with them.
   b. Think of how others may perceive your inconsistent behavior and how this threatens the legitimacy of the boundaries you have created with them.
   c. Example: If you are falling in love with somebody on the floor than you must consult, consult, consult, with the people who advise your position about how to handle this potentially compromising scenario.

9) Be aware of your power and influence as a leader and role model: Remember that your authority gives your power over the people you serve.
a. This kind of relationship is never a true friendship. While you have authority over another, you will always be a role-model and never a real friend.

b. Do not satisfy your friendship needs on your floor. Friends are people whom you have no authority over.

c. Example: You can be friendly with people on your floor, but being a friend to them requires that you compromise the legitimacy of your authority. This creates two classes of students on your floor and is, in practice, unfair.

10) The Law of Exposure - We need to communicate our boundaries.

a. A boundary that is not communicated is a boundary that is not working.
   i. We need to make clear what we do or do not want, and what we will or will not tolerate.
   ii. We need to also make clear that every boundary violation has a consequence.
   iii. A boundary without a consequence is nagging.

b. Be transparent and claim your time for yourself that you need to not be resentful of the time you have for the people you serve. Remember: you don’t have to give and give and give… if you are transparent, fair, and consistent, during the time that you choose to give.

c. Example: As a role model, what are you role-modeling to students on your floor if you can’t create a work/life balance.

Dealing with toxically needy people

Untreated individuals with personality disorders (maladaptive ways of getting basic social contact needs met) are dependent on the compliance of others to feel ok with themselves. They resist boundaries in an effort to control, manipulate, and dominate. This scenario requires that you are extra communicative with them about your boundaries. Let them know where you stop and where they begin, openly, honestly, consistently, and constantly. They will, without a doubt, resist your attempts to be in charge and, depending on the degree of their disorder, may “split” by talking to other RA’s about you behind your back. Make sure to present a compassionate, non-reactionary, and united front in maintaining solidarity with this student’s primary RA and her boundaries. A personality disorder will be marginalized by consistent boundaries and legitimate, united authority that practices up-front and fair consequences for repeated violation of the primary RA’s set boundaries for this student.
In Conclusion:

Boundaries are all around us. We come across them every day. Cars have theft-deterrent devices to prevent someone from stealing your car. Homes have deadbolts or locks to prevent someone else from invading your home and removing your possessions. Your office desk has a lock to prevent theft. Your locker at the club has a lock to keep your valuables safe. If your personal property is protected against theft, but you find yourself feeling like your emotional well-being is being stolen from you, then it is time to take steps to learn how to set boundaries so that your emotional well-being can be kept under lock and key.

Think about it. We go to a lot of effort and spend a lot of money to protect our material possessions - yet we often do little to protect ourselves. Aren't you worth more than all of your possessions?

Thanks,

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Help from:

http://www.outofthefogsite.com/CommonNonBehaviors/Boundaries.html

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZvzh7uxt_c