

Boundaries

Just as fences make for good neighbors, clear boundaries make for happier people.

The pandemic disrupted many boundaries. As we shifted to remote work, the line between life and work quickly eroded. Re-entry represents an opportunity to repair collapsed boundaries and establish new ones. Ready to get started?

Build Your Container

Boundaries create a container where we can be at our best, but it takes intention and attention to build this container. Start by asking:

- What do I need to be my best self at work, at home, and in life?
- What structures and rules help me be at my best?
- How can clear boundaries make it easier for me to realize my best self?

Desired outcome: You know yourself and the boundaries that will help you and others (e.g., your family and team) thrive.

Types of Boundaries



SPACE

Defining one's personal space is essential and so is having clarity about what is possible when one defines and protects their personal space.



TIME

Time is finite. Having clear boundaries about how much time you give to any task or person is critical. By allocating time and contracting with others upfront, you'll also avoid stress and conflicts.



ENERGY

Understand why you're giving your attention to different people, projects, and problems. Stay in your control center.



RELATIONSHIPS

We all crave human contact, and relationships are complicated. From coworkers to family, establish clear boundaries to ensure you're fully present when you can and need to be but not overextending yourself.

Setting Boundaries in a Remote World

Research has shown that remote work can increase the number of hours one works each week. For some people, it can also result in growing conflicts between one's work and life.

PROS OF REMOTE WORK	CONS OF REMOTE WORK
Less time lost to commuting	Work bleeds into life more easily
Reduced expenses on dry cleaning, eating out, travel, etc.	Less "me time" (e.g., no alone time during one's commute to work)
More time with spouse, family, etc.	Greater risk of distraction (togglng between house cleaning and work)
Environmental perks (significantly reduces most people's carbon footprints)	Less time for play
Less stressful for some people (e.g., those who previously didn't feel comfortable engaging in the on-site culture of the workplace)	Works better for some demographics than others (e.g., young digital nomads versus parents working remotely with young children)

Four-Steps to Establishing Boundaries



STEP 1:

Invest time in understanding what you need to be at your best when working remotely (e.g., office with a door, childcare, etc.).



STEP 2:

Be intentional when building structures (i.e., clarify what types of infrastructure-physical, technological, emotional, etc.-you need to thrive remotely).



STEP 3:

Engage others (e.g., ensure your family, coworkers, and even higher-ups understand what you need to succeed and why these things are essential).



STEP 4:

Once you've identified and established your boundaries, stick with them for at least six weeks (i.e., 30 workdays) and then reassess.

Navigating the Messy Middle

For many, remote work is already over or will be over soon. The next phase is the messy middle.

Pre-pandemic:

All on-site

Pandemic:

All remote

Post-pandemic:

Hybrid

The messy middle will require constant negotiations. What boundaries can you establish now to help you and your team manage this new model of work?

Explore the Different Levels and Layers of Boundaries

TYPE OF BOUNDARY	QUESTIONS	YOUR ACTIONS
<p>Physical</p>	<p>What do you need to transition between home and work and vice versa?</p> <p>What helps you be at your best?</p> <p>When you're not working, how do you "close the office door"? Do you shut down your computer or use it for other activities outside of work? Could you dedicate one device to work-related tasks?</p> <p>Are there other ways to create a more apparent divide between work and life?</p>	
<p>Mental</p>	<p>What do you need now to thrive?</p> <p>Are you more likely to thrive when engaging with others or working solo?</p> <p>What did you miss most when you started to work remotely (e.g., companionship at work, solitary time to reflect during your commute, etc.)?</p>	
<p>Emotional</p>	<p>What emotional boundaries eroded during the pandemic?</p> <p>How can you rebuild them?</p>	
<p>Temporal</p>	<p>Do you have set times for work?</p> <p>Do you have set times for taking care of yourself (meditating, working out, doing other things that support your well-being)?</p> <p>Could you be more intentional about scheduling these activities? If not, what's blocking you (e.g., family needs, unpredictable workflow, etc.)?</p>	

Leverage These Tools to Help Set Clear Boundaries



AWARENESS:

Notice and be curious. Ask yourself the following questions: What worked well? What could have worked better? What did I learn?

ACTIVATION:

Test and verify actions that help you build and maintain boundaries more effectively.

AGILITY:

Explore how to reclaim your boundaries, even when they are breached.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Ensure you are living in alignment with your values.

ACCELERATION:

Remember that even small shifts will make the process of building and maintaining boundaries easier over time.

Curious to learn more about the art of establishing and sustaining clear boundaries?

Set up a time to talk to **Dr. Camille Preston and the AIM Leadership team.**

Visit aimleadership.com.

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