

# Mindful Living: Your EAP Guide to Wellness

SPRING 2023

## HELLO, SPRING!

The first day of spring was March 20, 2023. By definition, spring is a time or season of growth or development (Merriam-Webster). Spring symbolizes newness, greenery, fresh and crisp air, warmer weather, and bright, beautiful, and blossoming colors throughout various landscapes. It also represents a time change—spring forward—or better known as daylight savings time. Some refer to spring as a fresh start. Others refer to spring as a time for “spring” cleaning. What does spring symbolize to you? As you take a mindful moment to set your intentions for this season, know that your



EAP team is readily available to assist you. Have a delightful and flourishing season!

## UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES

In this issue, we would like to take a moment to bring your attention and focus to boundaries. Boundaries mark the limitation(s) of an area or areas in our lives. Here are six different types of boundaries that we all have

([www.urbanwellnesscounseling.com](http://www.urbanwellnesscounseling.com)):

**Physical boundaries** pertain to your body, physical touch, and personal space.

**Emotional boundaries** apply to what you allow yourself to share and how much you decide to disclose to others.

**Time boundaries** involve how you spend and prioritize your time based on what is deemed important to you.

**Intimate boundaries** refer to consent, communication, and safety.

**Intellectual boundaries** relate to our individual thoughts and ideas.

**Material boundaries** refer to our possessions (i.e., home, belongings).

Consider each of these areas in your life and what kind of boundaries you have already set, the reason(s) you have chosen for setting those boundaries, and what types of boundaries you would like to newly implement moving forward.

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There are also three different boundary styles: porous boundaries, rigid boundaries, and healthy boundaries (therapistaid). Those who have porous boundaries can easily be taken advantage of while those who possess rigid boundaries have difficulty asking for help and building healthy support systems. Compare and contrast each boundary type and their respective characteristics below.

### Porous boundaries:

- Difficulty saying “no”
- People-pleasing behaviors/ avoids conflict by giving in to others
- Overshares personal information
- Passive communication style (difficulty expressing self, unnecessarily apologetic, prioritizes other’s feelings and opinions above their own, often leading to resentment)
- Overly trusting of others, even strangers

### Rigid boundaries

- Untrusting of others
- Says “no” most of the time
- Guarded, in general, and with personal information
- Avoids conflict by pushing others away
- Aggressive communication style (can be hostile or threatening, talking over another person, not leaving room for someone else’s viewpoint to be heard)

### Healthy Boundaries

- Has a healthy process of factoring who to let in and who to keep out
- Takes time to build trust with others
- Able to say “no”, when needed
- Accepts conflict as a normal part of life and actively works towards resolution
- Assertive communication style (uses a calm tone of voice, clearly states needs, shows respect to both yourself and the person receiving the communication)

Healthy boundaries are most effective when they are created based on your values, or the things



that are important to you. Even though many of your boundaries may be similar to those around you, your boundaries are unique to you, and they are yours—alone. Know your boundaries before entering a situation, agreeing to a commitment, and prior to making compromises. This will make it less likely for you to do something that you are not comfortable with. Know that you always have the right to say “no”. When doing so, be sure to express yourself clearly and without uncertainty, so there is no doubt about what you want and what you are communicating to others. Use confident body language and assertive communication skills.

Some helpful phrases to note when communicating healthy boundaries are:

1. “I’m not comfortable with \_\_\_\_.”
2. “I appreciate your suggestions but I think I’ve got it from here.”
3. “I am busy today but do you have some time next week?”
4. “Let me check my schedule and get back with you.”
5. “I can stop by later but I can only stay for 30 minutes.”
6. “I’ve had a busy week and I need some time to myself this weekend.”

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When developing healthy boundaries, remember to think about your values, know your limits, listen to your emotions, have respect for yourself and others, be assertive, and consider the long-term impact and how it will not only affect you, but those around you.

"Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves even when we risk disappointing others."

**BRENE BROWN**

*researcher, author, motivational speaker*

Forgive yourself for  
not knowing what you  
didn't know  
before you learned it.

– Maya Angelou

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN OUR GUT AND BRAIN

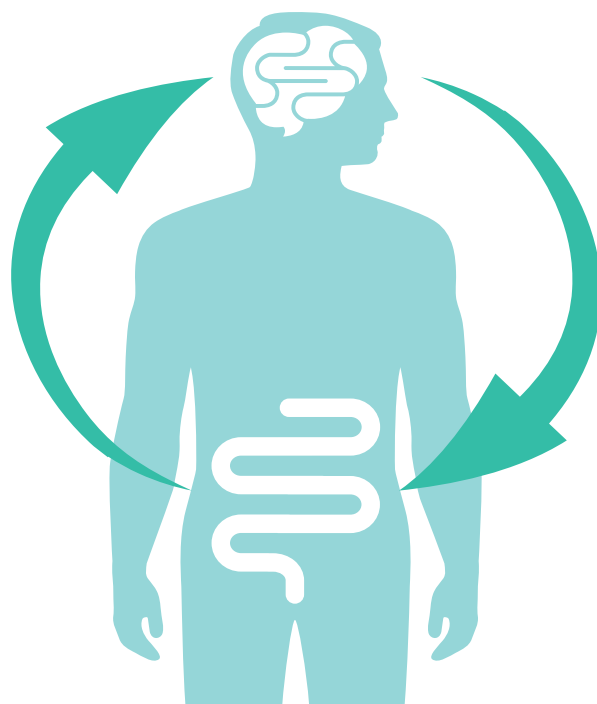
Have you ever experienced a 'gut instinct' or thought that you were 'eating your emotions'? Or perhaps you're familiar with your 'stress response'? If so, you know what the gut-brain connection is. Over the years, scientists have identified complex communication systems connecting digestion with thoughts, emotions and behaviours. In fact, there are physical, chemical, neural and hormonal communication between your microbiome (microorganisms, like bacteria, in the gut) and your nervous system (brain). Consequently, things that affect the microbiome also affect the brain and vice-versa. You have control over some of these influences with two such areas being diet and lifestyle.

**Diet:** Food provides nutrition for the microbiome and determines its diversity and stability. The best choices for a healthy gut and brain are whole grains, lean proteins, fermented foods, legumes, fruits and vegetables. The worst are sugar, processed foods and fast foods.

**Lifestyle:** Habits of sleeping, processing stress and exercising have tremendous influence on our brain's chemicals, which in turn impact moods, digestion,

emotions and pain.

Although you can't change genetics or age, you can try to consistently eat healthy, exercise and get adequate sleep to maintain a healthy gut-brain connection while reflecting on the positive impact these positive choices have on your mood, physical wellness, and energy level.



# HOMEWORK

Values are the things that are most important to you. Ideally, your boundaries will reflect your values. For example, if you value family time, you might set stricter boundaries at work.

1. Consider your most important values. How do your current boundaries reflect these values?
2. If your current boundaries do not reflect your values, how will you modify your boundaries to fit your values?
3. Reflect on a situation in which you articulated a boundary to a difficult person. How did this make you feel? Reflect on a situation in which you were not able to articulate a boundary and your values were compromised. How did this situation feel?
4. Think about where you currently have porous and/or rigid boundaries and ponder ways to implement healthier boundaries.
5. Assess your closest relationships with others to check for patterns of unhealthy and healthy boundaries.

Setting boundaries is a form of self-compassion but takes practice and can feel like an art form at times. When we ignore our boundaries and fail to communicate them to others resentment can often be the result. For those who are not used to setting healthy boundaries with others it may feel like you are being harsh or imposing. The goal of healthy boundary setting is not to take away from others but to show yourself respect and improve your relationships. Healthy boundary setting is both a kindness to yourself and others. If you think of your loved ones you'd probably want to know if they are uncomfortable or need certain considerations. By

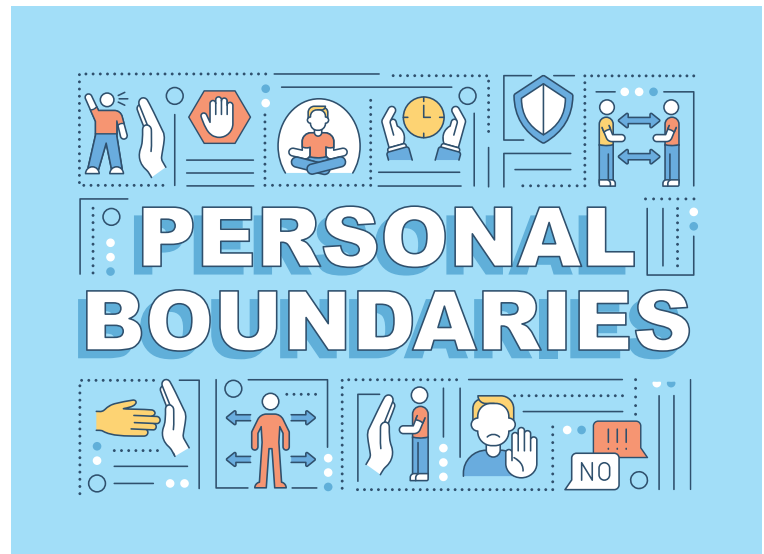
communicating your needs to others this allows them the opportunity to also show you that they care and ultimately strengthen the relationship. Boundary setting is something that takes practice, so be patient with yourself and take manageable steps towards your goal. When you are starting out setting boundaries it can be best to practice with the people in your life in which you feel the most comfortable, eventually working towards boundary setting with the more difficult relationships.

The following tips can be helpful when articulating a boundary. (<https://positivepsychology.com/great-self-care-setting-healthy-boundaries/>)

**Step 1.** Be as clear and as straightforward as possible. Do not raise your voice.

**Step 2.** State your need or request directly in terms of what you'd like, rather than what you don't want or like.

**Step 3.** Accept any discomfort that arises as a result, whether it's guilt, shame, or remorse.



**Your EAP team is here for you any time you need us. There is no issue too big or too small to talk to a professional about. All information is kept private and confidential including from your employer. Please contact **419-475-5338** to schedule an appointment.**



**Remember to ask us about the myStrength app, which is a behavioral health app that can assist you in meeting your health and wellness goals.**

