

Ep #205: Setting Boundaries



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Jen Riday

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You're listening to the *Vibrant Happy Women* podcast, episode #205. We're talking all about boundaries. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Jen Riday, and this podcast is for women who want to feel more vibrant, happy, aligned, and alive. You'll gain the emotional, physical, and spiritual tools you need to get your sparkle back and ensure that depression, anxiety, and struggle don't rule your life. Welcome to the Vibrant Happy Women Podcast.

Hey, my friends. It's Jen. Thank you for tuning in again. I'm so excited to talk about boundaries. This is an important topic if you feel like you don't have enough time or energy for what you actually want to do. But before we dive into boundaries, I want to talk first about the Vibrant Happy Women retreat, which I just returned from last week.

It was amazing. I heard the women say, and I said it myself, "Where else on the planet can I find this many amazing women in one place?" It's like a bunch of women who I would be best friends with all descend in one place, and I just sit there feeling so much love for them the whole time.

When we were workshopping, when we were eating, when we were at the pool or in the hot tub, amazing women. So, set an intention now to be at the retreat in 2021. All right, well, enough about the retreat. I had a blast, long story short.

I also want to share a review of the week, which comes from SpiritedSquad and she wrote, "I am 43 with four kids. My husband works crazy hours and travels a lot. I've been burned out for a while, serving everyone other than myself. Honestly, I forgot about me. I found the podcast four months ago, joined the club last week. Already beginning to make so many positive changes. Totally getting my groove back."

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Aw, that is awesome. Let's all get our groove back. I'm so glad you listen, SpiritedSquad, and thank you for sharing your review. Now, a while back I said, "Oh, if we hit 1,000 reviews I won't do ads." Well, I love you, I know you're busy, but we've hit 518. But I'm so cool, I'm still not going to do ads. Thank you to those of you who took the time to leave a review.

If you haven't yet, I would greatly appreciate it. It would be the best thing since tuna noodle casserole, something I used to love in high school. You're like, "Ew." Anyway, today I want to talk about boundaries. I just got off a coaching call for the Vibrant Happy Women Club. We have about four coaching calls every month where I coach individuals on the topic that they want to talk about.

We also have classes, and we're going to be covering boundaries later this month in depth. Well, on the coaching call, I won't share any names of who I was coaching, but a couple of women shared that they struggle to set boundaries, so I thought it would be a good idea to share what does it mean to establish a healthy boundary.

Well, let's start with what it does not mean. Many of us falsely believe that a boundary means we've got to get people to do what we think they should do. Now, as far as adults are concerned, we cannot tell them what to do. We cannot control them, we can not make them feel a certain way, we cannot emotionally manipulate them through guilt or shame.

Those aren't really the way to set a boundary. Instead, a boundary involves deciding what you are going to do when you feel uncomfortable in someone's presence, or something they're doing is annoying you, or sucking your time, or sucking your energy. What are you going to do?

So, for example, let's say your neighbor calls you every Thursday and asks for a ride to the drugstore. And for a while you think it's amazing, you love to help, but after a few weeks of this you're realizing it's becoming a pattern

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and you think, “Ugh, this is really eating into my schedule. I don’t have time to do what I need to do. I’m starting to feel resentful.”

Well, in this situation, you have two choices. Your first choice is to change your thought. Maybe your thought is, “She should not call me every week. That’s crazy,” but if you go ahead and do what she’s asking, even with that thought, you’re not showing integrity with yourself. You’re not listening to what you want, which might be to finish up the meal for dinner, so you have a good dinner with your family.

Or maybe you wanted to play with your daughter after school and you’re going to the drugstore instead. It’s not allowing you to honor your priorities when you think a certain thought but don’t live in integrity with that thought. So, your other option is to decide how often can you help while still honoring your other priorities.

For example, if your family is your top priority and your neighbor isn’t one of your top four priorities, then maybe you decide, “Ugh, I’m not going to help at all, but I am going to put her in touch with how to use Uber on her telephone. Cool. I’m solving her problem, but I’m also meeting my needs.”

The other option is to look at your priorities, and maybe your top priority is family, but maybe your third or fourth priority is serving other people, and you realize, “Okay, driving her to the drugstore actually feels really good. How can I do it in a balanced way? I think maybe once every other week would be the appropriate balance.” And then you let her know, that’s when I can do it.

Now, here’s where it gets tricky and where a lot of people struggle with boundaries. So, let’s say you tell her, “I can drive you on the first and third Thursdays every week, Dorothy.” Let’s say her name is Dorothy, your neighbor. And she calls you on the second Thursday and you’re thinking, “Oh, gosh, she’s 80 years old. Oh, gosh, I should really help her, but I’m

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not going to be able to help my kids after school with their homework if I do. Oh, what do I do?"

Discomfort. Let's pause here and remember, the worst that can happen in this situation is a feeling, a feeling of discomfort. And maybe that discomfort comes thoughts of, "I should help her. I should do this for her. Who else is going to help her if not me?" But then you have to remember your priorities. If your family's your top priority, you really need to do that homework.

Maybe you say, "Hey, Dorothy, I'm so sorry, it's the second Thursday. I'm not going to be able to help you today. Call me next week." And then you let it go, you feel your feelings, and you move on and go enjoy your kids like you had planned, so a boundary.

So, how did that work? You did not tell Dorothy how she should behave. You did not try to control her or get resentful at her because she called you on the second Thursday. Remember, boundaries do not involve controlling the other person or getting frustrated that they're not doing what we think they should do. That's only hurting you.

Instead, a healthy boundary is established with love, love for Dorothy, and love for your kids, and love for yourself. When you recognize all these competing needs and priorities, you can say, "Dorothy, I am so happy to help, however, it's not the first Thursday. Call me next week, I'll be happy to help. It's on my calendar." And then you hang up and go enjoy your kids.

Remember, you don't have to feel resentful that she called or that she "pushed on your boundary", you just say, "Hey, the boundary's here. I love myself enough to follow through with this consequence." Okay, that's one example.

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Now, let's talk about an example I experienced. I foolishly once threw a birthday party for one of my younger kids. I think I had four kids at the time. My newborn, who was maybe two weeks old, was in a baby Babybjörn front pack on the front of me. My other three kids were running around, and I invited all of these other moms and their young children over for the birthday party.

Well, in my mind I thought, "They should be helping me. These other moms should be helping me. I have this newborn and I have all these other kids, and can't they see I'm exhausted and frazzled?" But the fact of the situation was not a single one of them lifted a finger to help me.

Now, we could analyze why that was. Maybe I put off an air of don't help me, or that I've got this, and that's very likely, but I felt resentful. Now, many of us would falsely believe that establishing a boundary would mean, in this situation, to say, "Hey, you guys, could you help me?" or, "You should be helping me. I have this newborn. Could someone help me here."

But you notice that tone in my voice and that I'm feeling that resentment. Remember, all our feelings come from a thought, and my thought is, "They should be helping me, but they're not. Darn them. I hate these people. What's up with them?" They were just talking and oblivious to everything I was trying to do, and a newborn in front of me.

Now, I could have looked at the situation, valued myself enough to say, with love, "Hey, could someone hold my baby and could some else light these candles?" And they would've been happy to help. I didn't have to assume that they should know what I was thinking. So, I think that's really a good example of how we do this with other people.

They shouldn't be asking me to drive them every week. They shouldn't be so annoying. They should care how I feel. They should notice that I'm frazzled. When we should, all over other people, we only end up hurting

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ourselves. Boundaries do not involve us ever thinking another person should do anything at all. It just involves us taking the action we can take and be 100% responsible for our happiness, our time, and our energy.

So, in that birthday situation, I could have established a healthy boundary by making sure I had my husband there for the party, which I didn't. I was trying to be super mom. I should have established a healthy boundary to preserve my precious energy by asking people in advance to help me, or by paying to have that cake made, or by having less kids, or heaven forbid I postpone the birthday party until my baby was at least six weeks old.

So, a lot of the situations we cause for ourselves, situations of feeling drained and resentful and frustrated, we could fix just by prioritizing our own happiness, our own time, and our own energy. Okay, another example. Let's say you have a husband who sometimes criticizes something you're doing, like, "Oh, you should be going to fix our kids lunches instead of painting your fingernails," or, "You should be helping with bedtime instead of talking to your mom on the phone," or whatever.

These slight little ways that we as couples end up criticizing each other. Now, some of us might think, "Oh, I need to establish a boundary. He can't talk to me like that." That's not a boundary. He can talk to you however he wants. It is not your job to get him to talk to you differently or to get him to feel a certain way, even though that would be nice.

When we try to control other people, we just end up frustrated and they end up feeling controlled. What can we do instead? Well, when behaviors occur that we don't like, we can decide in advance what we are going to do about it. For example, when someone criticizes you, especially your spouse, you can decide to explain, "Oh, you're criticizing me again. When you do that, I walk out of your presence."

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You're letting them know clearly what the boundary is and what the consequence is. And what's really helpful is a lot of people don't even know they're criticizing, so you're putting a label on what they did. "Oh, that's actually criticism, and when you do that, I walk away." Whew! That's pretty powerful.

Now, a lot of people might pause there and get really uncomfortable because many of us get stuck in people-pleasing syndrome where we think, "Oh, they're going to be mad at me if I walk away." Well, the worst that can happen is a feeling. And if your number one goal is to preserve your precious energy and time and happiness, which it should be, because we want to interact from a place of authenticity and true, high-vibe energy.

Then, it's okay if you feel uncomfortable. That feeling will pass. The worst that can happen is a feeling. Let's say you have a teenager and they are not making it home for their curfew, and you might think, "Ugh, I have to establish a boundary here." Well, technically, remember a boundary is not getting someone else to change a behavior, it's protecting yourself.

Now, in this situation it's actually a natural consequence. "When you are late, you lose the privilege of losing our wi-fi," or, "When you are late, you gain the privilege of cleaning the kitchen the next day." However you want to set those up, you can consult with your favorite parenting expert on how that's done, but technically speaking, a boundary is just established to preserve your precious time, energy, and happiness.

Natural consequences are what we use with children, or even spouses or others, when they've done something and they get to experience whatever discomfort comes as a result of that, which might be you walking away, you not giving them a ride, you not leaving the light on, you not keeping the door open, whatever it is.

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Now, a final thought on boundaries. One of the easiest ways to get really good at boundaries is to become aware of what fills your cup and what drains your cup. You have to start paying attention. Maybe you recognize that when you walk into the kitchen, and it's a giant mess, that's really draining for you if you're anything like me.

Well, you have two choices in this situation. Number one, change your thought about the room. "The room should be clean. They should've cleaned it up after dinner." Well, that thought is going to cause a feeling of resentment and frustration. Change your thought, "They should not clean it up. We should all clean it up together," or, "I should clean it up."

What can you control? Take 100% responsibility for that situation and do what you can to feel the way you want to feel. So, clean it up or change your thought, those are the choices. Now, in families, this does not mean you do everything. You have every right to establish those natural consequences. You have every right to request people to help.

An easy way to do this is to say to your, let's say, 16-year-old, "Hey, honey, it's your day to unload the dishwasher. I need you to have it done by xyz time." Friendly voice, coming from love. If they fail to do it, what's the natural consequence? You have to decide how that works for you.

Maybe they can't use your internet. Maybe the next time they need a ride you'll remind them, "Oh, I needed your help the other day. You didn't help me. I have to preserve my time, so I'm not going to be able to help you." That's where boundaries get tricky because it's uncomfortable to do that. Remember, the worst that can happen is a feeling.

Sit with your discomfort, recognize where you feel it in your body, breathe through it, and let it pass. These are your feelings and they don't have to cause you to abandon the boundary you would like to establish to preserve your energy, your time, and your happiness.

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So, know your likes and dislikes. Know what fills your cup and what drains it, and start paying attention to how you can preserve your time, your energy, and your happiness. That's what a boundary is about. So, to recap, boundaries are establishing a rule of what you will do if you don't like how someone is trying to take your time, energy, or happiness. Only you can determine that.

Maybe for you, you need one hour alone for rejuvenation every evening, and maybe your boundary is, "If you guys keep knocking on my door, I'm going to leave and go do this in the minivan over at the park." And I will find this alone time one way or another. And if you follow through on that, even if it's uncomfortable, they will learn you mean what you say, and they'll press on your boundaries less and less often. It's all about following through.

Come from love, do what you can do, take 100% responsibility for managing your time, your energy, and your happiness, and align things with your priorities, and you'll be just fine. This is the art of healthy boundaries. I would love to hear how this is working for you. Let me know. You can email us at any time at Support@JenRiday.com.

Also, I would love for you to leave us a review on iTunes. You can do that at JenRiday.com/review. I appreciate you listening. Go establish some healthy boundaries. Remember, it's all about prioritizing your happiness, your time, and your energy.

That stuff matters because we want to interact from a place of authenticity and high-vibe energy, so people feel all that good energy coming from us. These boundaries are so, so worth it. Thank you so much for listening and I'll see you again soon. Take care.

If you enjoy this podcast, you have to check out the Vibrant Happy Women Club. It's my monthly group coaching program where we take all this

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material to the next level and to get you the results that will blow your mind.
Join me in the Vibrant Happy Women Club at jenriday.com/join.