

321: Thoughts and Boundaries



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Jen Riday

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321: Thoughts and Boundaries

You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. I'm Dr. Jen Riday. And today I'm going to talk to you about how do you know when you need to change your thinking or whether you need to set a boundary. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Jen Riday. 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 there, my friends, welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women. This is the place to uplevel your life, to change how you think, to set proper boundaries so you can be your best self, so you can get your sparkle back and know what you want and go after it. I'm so glad you're here. On this episode I'm going to be talking about boundaries and thoughts. As you know, I teach thought tables. In fact, I was recently in the most recent coach certification classes teaching about thought tables.

Just to recap, thought tables are based on cognitive behavioral therapy. And the way I teach them, there are facts provable in a court of law. There are thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. Ultimately all the results we have in our lives are because of how we're thinking, because every thought either empowers us or disempowers us, makes us an emotional powerhouse or an emotional victim. Every thought either moves us forward or keeps us stuck. There's nothing wrong with processing your emotions, don't get me wrong.

Sometimes we do need self-pity. Sometimes we do need to numb with the latest Netflix show. We need breaks from our emotions but ideally we process through, we handle our feelings like we learned so well throughout the pandemic. And then we look at our thoughts and we say, "Hey, okay, this is the result I've been having. I've been procrastinating. I've been

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unmotivated, I'm not getting a lot done. I wonder why? Let's back it up and figure it out."

Well, I haven't been doing anything, why? Because I have been feeling depressed. Okay, what thought is making me feel depressed? Now, again that's after you've processed your feelings. We don't want to stay stuck in sadness or depression. But we want to see what thoughts might be contributing. Now, this is not to belittle true clinical depression. I'm a firm believer in medication when it is needed, it is helpful.

A lot of my family members have taken antidepressants. I've taken an antidepressant. But we have to know that we can spiral up from depression or we can spiral further down. And that's all based on what we're thinking, what we're shining the flashlight of our thoughts on. So what thought was making me sad? Well, let's say you were getting nothing done. You're saying, "I have way too much to do." That's a thought. That's a thought many of us choose.

When I think I have way too much to do, I feel overwhelmed. I take no action because it looks intimidating and I'm stuck with no progress, total procrastination, that is a thought yielding that result. The fact is I have stuff. The fact is I have hours in the day. The fact is I can do things. So, we uplevel it if we want a new result we uplevel that thought. Okay, I want to get my attic decluttered by the end of the year. That's totally doable. I could potentially do it by the end of this quarter for example if I want to. I do not. But this is an example.

So, I need to take some action. Okay, what feeling would generate action? I know depression, sadness, overwhelm do not get me into a state of action. So how about confidence, can do, determination, commitment, excitement. How do I generate that feeling? Well, I know I have too much to do didn't work, that thought kept me stuck. The fact is I have stuff, I have hours. What new thought?

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I'm going to work 15 minutes a day while I play my favorite music and count it as my workout. Whoa, mind blowing. I can totally do that. I want to work out anyway. I walk every day. I'm going to turn on the music and declutter while I call it a workout 15 minutes a day with a timer. Totally can do that. That generates a feeling of confidence for me. How does it make you feel? When I feel confident I'm going to go do it and I get the new result. Upleveling, thought tables, awesome.

Now, that works so much of the time but sometimes we set the thought table aside and we just need a good old fashioned boundary. So, let's review what is a boundary? A boundary is based on an idea that we as individuals, I am, you are 100% responsible for my thoughts, feelings, actions, and results just as you as an adult are 100% responsible for your thoughts, feelings, actions, and results.

Now, you might say, "Well, what if I am in a country that was invaded by another country? Or what if I'm in an abusive marriage? Or what if I grew up in poverty? Or what if I had this past trauma?" Set all that aside, you still get to decide how you show up now, how you think about that experience, how you feel about it. And that's going to lead you to either be stuck in inaction or taking the actions that will you get a result that you want.

So, for the example of a war ravaged country. Yes, that is sad. Yes, feeling your emotions. You need to process emotions. We need to move them through, so they don't get stuck. That's why we use Feel It To Heal It which I've talked about on other podcast episodes. But ultimately if you're thinking, my life is over, why bother, you will feel depressed, take no action, get no result.

What if instead for an example the leader of Ukraine who I find so inspiring, you believe a thought like it's up to me to make a difference here. I'm going to stand up for my country. I'm going to stand up for my life. I'm going to get the job I want. I'm going to be the parent I want even if my spouse isn't.

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Those thoughts are empowering, taking your power back and being responsible. You feel confident, you take new actions, get new results. So the thinking is related to setting the boundary.

Okay, now here is when you stop upleveling or pause and you set a boundary and let me give you an example. Let's say you have a surly teenage boy. I've had three. Well, no, maybe only two of them were surly, who am I kidding? Every teenager is surly at some point or another. And you think the thought, he's driving me crazy. He's driving me crazy. You can uplevel that and you should because he's driving me crazy makes you feel frustrated, you'll probably sigh whenever they're around and the relationship won't get better. Fact, thought, feeling, action result.

You could uplevel it to, hey, teenagers are supposed to want to differentiate from their parents. Teenagers are supposed to be annoying because they're becoming independent. You feel less resentful and frustrated, you'll probably keep reaching out even though they're being surly. The result, a better relationship. Cool, upleveling works. But let's say this surly teen is constantly seeking you out and badgering you to let them do something you've said they can't do.

He wants me to log him in, but he's got two F's on his report card. I can't do that. What do I do? How do I uplevel this? You don't. This is where you set the boundary. "Honey, we need to talk about the rules, in my world you should have decent grades. We can decide together what decent means in order to use our Wi-Fi and my computer. Let's talk together about what that means." You're setting the boundary of what you're going to do with your Wi-Fi and your computer in response to someone else's behavior. That is a boundary.

What action will you take? Something you can control in response to a situation or a behavior. You're not forcing your son to stop badgering you about the computer. You're not forcing your son to get the proper grades.

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Instead, you're saying what you'll do in response. You don't need to uplevel your thoughts in this situation. So, you say, "Honey, you have enough, the Wi-Fi will be off until I see that this grade is a minimum a B or even an A. Good luck." And then you walk away. That is your boundary, what you will do in response to someone else's behavior.

You're owning your computer, you're owning your Wi-Fi. Yes, it impacts your child but it's what you will do. You're not whining, or nagging, or complaining, or willing them to change their grades. You're just giving the consequence and the boundary. Now, let's say they do follow you around and badger you. "I'm so tired of him talking to me about this", you could say. That's a thought, that's going to lead to frustration. And ultimately it will end up hurting the relationship when you feel frustrated with them.

So instead, you can protect and preserve your precious mood, and time, and energy by saying, "This decision has been made. When you talk to me about this I will walk away because the rule is in place." And you can shut the door and leave, or you can go in your minivan and go to Target, what you will do in response to someone else's behavior. So, with kids this is a great example, let's talk about spouses.

So, let's do the dishwasher example. You would like your spouse to unload the dishwasher without being asked. You think they should want to do that for you because you do so much. I mean if they loved you, they would unload the dishwasher. Okay, now pause, you heard a thought there. The fact is you have a dishwasher. The fact is you have dishes. Neutral. This is a fact. Whether or not he or your spouse, they should or should not do the dishwasher is a thought. Your thought is if my spouse loves me he will unload the dishwasher.

What happens? How do you feel when you think that thought and it's not happening? You feel resentment. When you feel resentment, how do you behave with your partner? You sigh, you make snarky comments, you're

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ultimately, the result is you're less close. How do you like that result? I doubt you love it. You believe falsely that if he would just unload the dishwasher then I would feel happy, and we would have a better relationship. Notice what you're doing. You are violating a boundary because you're telling your spouse how to behave.

Hold up your thinking, I don't want to do it all, that's true. But here's what you can control. What will you do in response to your spouse not helping? First of all, have a conversation about who's going to do what. Maybe you learn that your spouse would rather cook, like mine. And it works a lot better if you just let go of control of the cooking and you do the dishwasher. Who knows what solution you're going to come up with? But you agree upon the solution and then you figure out your response when things aren't happening.

So maybe it's when you forget to cook then I will order pizza. I love that one. I do that one. Because you had an agreement that he was cooking on such and such a night so therefore you don't have time, you're ordering pizza on his dime. I don't know, you get to decide together. Notice, it's what you will do in response to a situation. You don't have to stay stuck thinking thoughts that lead to resentment. Maybe he should not unload the dishwasher. Maybe he should cook. Who knows what truth you're going to come up with?

But ultimately you get to kind of do this beautiful dance between changing your thoughts about something, maybe you say, "I should unload the dishwasher. I should do everything because he's anxious and he's not going to do it. So why do I keep asking?" That's one way to uplevel it. But another way is with the boundary where you say what you will or will not do in response to someone else's behavior or a situation.

Here's another one. When your dear family leave the house really messy, I will because I love it clean need to spend a lot of my time cleaning. That

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means I won't be available to take you to the movie later. Or dear family, that means I will need to hire a housekeeper that we'll all pay for together because I don't have time to work at my job, and volunteer, and keep the house clean all by myself. That's not something I'm willing to do.

So, try this out, yes, you can uplevel your thoughts. Sometimes you get tired of upleveling, or you don't want to. And then you can set a boundary, what you will do in response to a situation or behavior. It is not trying to get someone else to think, or feel, or behave differently. It's what you will do in response. Magically there is a trickledown effect, as you hold a boundary their behavior will often change ultimately.

An example, I have a friend who was really frustrated in her marriage, very frustrated. She tried talking about things. She tried suggesting, she tried to explain. "I don't like when you talk to the kids this way, I can't stand it." She started to withdraw. She could have upleveled her thoughts and said, "Well, he can talk to the kids however he wants." But that really wasn't true, and it didn't feel true in her body, didn't feel true in her heart. She knew that wasn't working. She didn't love all the clutter that he was leaving everywhere.

And so ultimately the day came when she was so tired of trying to uplevel her thoughts and to feel differently about the situation, she realized, this isn't working, I'm going to move into the boundary mode. What was her boundary? It was nice and clear. She decided I can't be happy or feel emotionally safe in this cluttered kind of emotionally abusive environment. Therefore, I'm going to tell him we're separating. I'm going to find a place. I'm going to go create the environment I want.

Notice, she stopped talking, she stopped nagging and she said what she would do in response to a situation so she could feel the way she wanted to feel. She went after her emotional safety and created it. Now, in some cases that's the end. Partners don't always want to change.

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In this case he suddenly realized, she means business. She's got a place. She's got a plan. Oh my gosh. He responded to her boundary by going to marriage and family therapy and getting help and shocking her with the amount of change he was willing to make in order to create that emotional safety that was essential for her and for their kids.

So, your boundary will train people and teach people how to treat you. If they don't want to behave the way you want, that's their business. You can't force them to change or nag them into changing. But you can take an action to feel differently. You can uplevel your thoughts, that works sometimes, but sometimes it's a boundary where you remove yourself from a situation or you get extra help, or you find a different space, or you create whatever it is you need to feel the way you want to feel.

So, these are my thoughts on boundaries. I want to challenge you to journal about this in your life. And here are two questions I want you to answer in your journal or on any sheet of paper you have handy.

Number one, what are the things that are really causing you frustration and resentment in your life right now? Just do a brain download. What is causing you resentment and frustration right now? Okay, step one.

Step two, look at them and really think about could I uplevel my thoughts about this? Do a thought table, figure out, should I change my thinking? Could I think differently about this to feel differently and change the result here? Or if you've tried that, you're tired of that then you go to plan B and what boundary, second question, the third question really, part B of question two, what boundary do I need to establish here? What will I do in response to this situation to preserve and protect my precious time, mood, and energy?

So, try it out, let me know how it goes. We're working through this in the Vibrant Happy Women coach certification right now. That's why it's on my

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mind and it's powerful, it's so powerful when you learn to do this because people recognize you're going to feel how you want to feel. You're going to be emotionally safe. You're going to have calm and peace. You get to decide that, whether it's through changing your thoughts or changing your environment with a boundary. You've got this my friends.

I love you, keep up the great work with your thoughts and your boundaries so you can create the most vibrant and happy version of you. I will see you again next time. Until then make it a vibrant, happy and boundaried emotionally safe week. Take care.

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