

?Setting boundaries is the single most common issue my clients deal with in their personal and professional lives. Why do women find them so difficult to put in place? And what can you do if a lack of boundaries is standing between you and the career success you desire?

What are Boundaries?

Whether you're working in the corporate world or running your own business, you need to develop and continually exercise strong boundaries. Boundaries are the environment within which you operate - mentally, emotionally and physically. They separate you from other people.

Think of a boundary like a vase. The vase is holding a beautiful bouquet of flowers - these represent your mind, body and spirit. If the vase were to break, the flowers would be scattered about, the water keeping them alive would flow over the table and on to the floor and very soon the blooms would wither. The same thing happens when you don't have boundaries. You feel overwhelmed, out of control, and scattered. And, still worse, you make yourself vulnerable to being controlled and manipulated by others because you're afraid to stand up for who you are. We need boundaries, "the vase," in order to bloom, in fact, quite simply, to survive.

Why are Boundaries So Difficult to Set?

There are several reasons why women find boundary setting challenging:

1. They don't like confrontation.
2. They're socialized to be nice because "that's the way they're supposed to be," and
3. They're afraid people won't like them.

Women seem to experience more difficulty setting boundaries than men do. We're socialized in a way which makes it seem like we're "bad" if we are too assertive. My clients often comment that they're afraid that if they say "no" or speak out, that their colleagues will not like them, or even heaven forbid that they will become the office B**** that everyone loves to hate.

Life is filled with confrontation of one sort or another. We must all learn to deal with it. No one will agree with you 100% of the time. The opposite is also true. And, others will not always treat you with respect, no matter how much you may deserve it. Confrontation is where problems are aired and new lines are set. When you look at it from this perspective confrontation actually plays an important part in our growth as people.

Being nice and having boundaries are not mutually exclusive. Setting boundaries does