

# Protecting your heart

*A non-bs approach to self-care*

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# Compassion Fatigue

What is it? How is it different from burnout?

- Burnout can happen to anyone with unmanaged workplace stress
- Compassion fatigue, however, happens to helpers and caregivers
- In some cases, this can be vicarious or secondary trauma
- This doesn't require years of chronic exposure- can happen after one particularly impactful interaction

# Warning Signs

What should you be on the lookout for?

## Emotional

- Anger
- Reduced empathy
- Sadness, hopelessness
- Cognitive impairment: brain fog, difficulty concentrating
- Numb, detached

## Social

- Increased use of substances
- Struggles with boundaries
- Distancing from friends
- Self-care neglect

## Physical

- Autoimmune flare-ups or autoimmune disease
- Sleep impacts
- Chronic fatigue
- Heightened stress responses

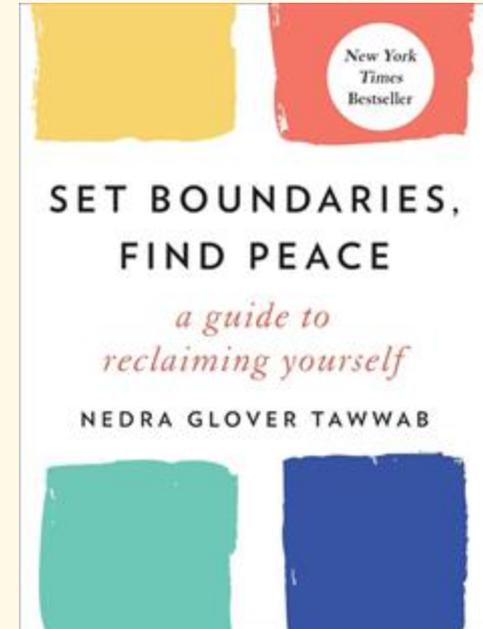
# Boundaries

You've heard them and maybe you hate them....but you need 'em!

- Reactions? Worries? Beliefs?
- Guiding principle: a boundary is **not** telling someone what they can and cannot do. It **is** telling someone what you can or cannot do **or** will and won't accept in relationship
- Boundaries are not controlling of others; they help **you** take responsibility for your well-being

## Healthy boundaries

- Clearly communicated
- Flexible, adaptable. Not completely open and not completely closed.
- Set boundaries out of necessity- not guilt
- **Self-awareness first**



# Boundaries

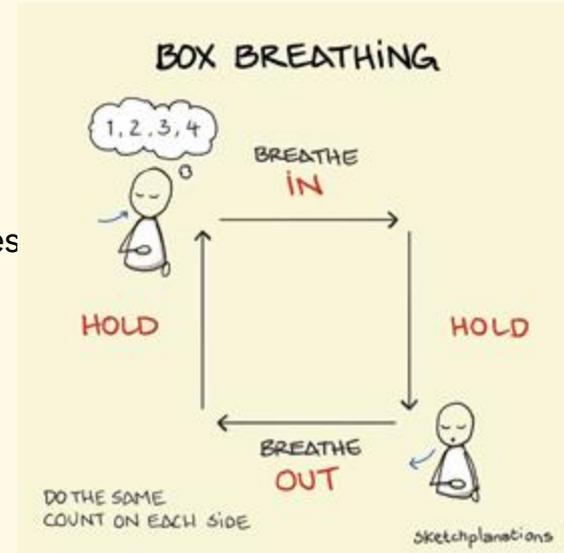
You've heard them and maybe you hate them...but you need 'em!

- **But how, though?**
  - 1. Be clear and direct- no overexplaining!
    - "I'm not available to talk about this right now. Let's revisit this later"
  - 2. Use "I" Statements and speak from your own perspective
    - "I need advance notice before making plans, so I'll have to say no if it's last-minute."
- **Sentence prompts for work:**
  - *"I'm not able to respond to emails after 6 p.m."*
  - *"My plate is full, so I can't take on another project right now."*
  - *"I need clearer expectations before I can move forward on this task."*
  - *"I'm taking Sundays for rest, so I won't be available."*
  - *"I need to log off now to prioritize my sleep."*
  - *"I can't commit to that event, but I hope it goes well."*

# Real, non-BS self-care

This doesn't need to cost anything or take a lot of time. But it **must** be consistent.

- If you want this to work, you have to practice your strategies. Especially when you aren't in a fight/flight/freeze situation.
- Don't @ me....
  - But you have to learn how to breathe!
  - Box breathing —>
- Gratitude journal: 3 things, everyday
- Grounding 5-4-3-2-1
- Every hour, put your phone on airplane mode and lay on the ground for 3 minutes 5 if you can.
- Ruminating? Write it down and set it aside.
- Can't leave your space? 5 jumping jacks
- Face the sun
- Choose 1 thing to say no to everyday.
- Send a gif/meme/funny video to a friend
- Ask ChatGPT to make you a free, 5 minute daily self-care routine



# Advocacy

What can you do when you don't have all the power?

- The world is on fire. Our worlds are a blaze. Our client's worlds are too.
- Find places where you can push and advocate
- Know your rights. Read the HR policies for your company. Do you have a union? Speak with your rep.
- Find a coalition of co-workers and mentors. Isolation is a tool of oppression.
  - Who gets listened to? Who can leverage their position or privilege?
- One of the best advocacy strategies: not working more than you are required!
  - The more you give, the more the system will require you to give.
- Small, consistent limits
- Choose your battles.
  - Determine when it is time to fight and time to let it go so you are constituted enough to fight the good fight

# Q&A

What still remains?

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