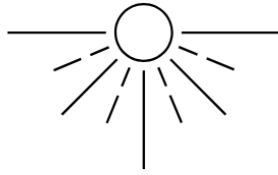


THE HOLISTIC COUNSELOR PODCAST



A LEARNING & REFLECTION GUIDE

Boundaries Without Guilt

A guide to people-pleasing, honest limits, and
respectful connection.

READ / LISTEN / REFLECT

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FROM THE MIC TO THE COMMUNITY

BOUNDARIES & GUILT / BEGIN HERE

A little room to begin.

Hello there, fearfully and wonderfully made human.

Maybe you say yes before you check your calendar. Maybe you keep explaining until the other person approves. Maybe your family, workplace, or faith community has taught you that being needed is the same as being good.

This guide is an invitation to notice the cost of your automatic yes and practice a more honest response. Your relationships, cultural responsibilities, resources, and safety all deserve consideration.

Listen alongside this guide

Two conversations to explore as you read. Choose the one that speaks to where you are today.

EPISODE 103

Emotions and people-pleasing with Jon Waller

Emotional expression, people-pleasing, and the ways anger may be expressed indirectly.

[Listen or read the transcript](#)

EPISODE 118

Parts work, trauma, and faith with Lynn Kearney

A parts-work perspective on protective patterns and approaching yourself with curiosity.

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IN THESE PAGES

Understand / 03

Practice / 05

Reflect / 06

BOUNDARIES & GUILT / UNDERSTAND

You can care and have limits.

What do we mean by a boundary?

In this guide, a boundary is a clear limit around your participation, time, energy, body, or belongings. It may involve a request, but you cannot guarantee another person's agreement. A workable limit describes what you can choose or do.

A SMALL DIFFERENCE IN WORDS

“Please call before visiting” is a request.

“I can host on Saturday afternoon; I cannot host on weekday evenings” makes your availability clear.

A boundary need not be a threat or a punishment.

People-pleasing is a description, not a diagnosis

You might avoid disagreement, take on too much, or repeatedly seek permission to have a preference. These habits can have different histories. Rather than deciding you are broken, ask what you expect will happen if someone is disappointed.

Try a more direct form of care

Assertiveness involves stating your perspective clearly while respecting other people. It differs from staying silent about your needs and from trying to overpower someone else. Practice can help you communicate without assuming you must either surrender or fight. [1]

Start with one specific limit you can realistically keep, communicate it respectfully, and allow some discomfort. Feeling guilty is a reason to reflect; it is not automatic proof that the limit is wrong. Safety and your circumstances matter.

BOUNDARIES & GUILT / MAKE ROOM FOR CONTEXT

When guilt shows up.

Does guilt mean I did something wrong?

Sometimes guilt points to a real responsibility: a promise you broke, a person you hurt, or a repair you want to make. Sometimes it arrives because a different choice feels unfamiliar. Ask: "What exactly did I do? Was I disrespectful, or am I uncomfortable with someone's disappointment? Is there a responsibility I need to address?"

You can apologize for speaking harshly while keeping the limit itself. You can also reconsider a boundary when new information changes the situation. Flexibility and self-respect can coexist.

What about family, culture, or faith?

Supporting family and serving a community can be meaningful choices. Consider what is freely chosen, what is realistically sustainable, and what is expected under pressure. Your answer may be different from someone else's. The goal is an honest decision that acknowledges your context.

OPTIONAL FAITH REFLECTION

What does responsible care look like in this situation, including care for the body, commitments, and relationships entrusted to you? You do not have to use guilt as the only guide to service.

When the issue is safety

Threats, intimidation, coercion, stalking, or violence need more than a better script. Confronting someone can increase risk. A domestic-violence advocate can help develop an individualized safety plan; support with safety planning is more appropriate than practicing a confrontation. [4]

BOUNDARIES & GUILT / PRACTICE

Words you can make your own.

Choose a low-risk situation to begin. Keep the message specific and brief, and rehearse it if that helps. You do not have to provide a long defense. Respectful communication can improve clarity, but it cannot ensure that someone responds well. [2,3]

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 01 | When you need time to decide
"I need to look at my commitments. I will let you know tomorrow." |
| 02 | When a family member wants more time
"I want to spend time together. I can stay until three on Sunday." |
| 03 | When your work is already full
"I can complete this by Friday if we move the other deadline. Which should take priority?" |
| 04 | When you are asked to serve again
"I care about this ministry. I am not available for another role this season." |
| 05 | When a conversation becomes disrespectful
"I want to discuss this. If the insults continue, I will pause the conversation and revisit it later." Use only when pausing or leaving is safe. |

What if the person keeps asking?

A short restatement may be enough: "I understand that this is disappointing. My availability is still the same." You can listen without negotiating indefinitely. If you have an obligation that needs another arrangement, name it and discuss a realistic alternative. [2]

BOUNDARIES & GUILT / REFLECT

Prepare one honest conversation.

Choose a situation that is safe enough to practice. A few words may be enough to clarify what you need and what you would like to say.

Type into the spaces below, or print this page and write by hand.

01 The request or situation I want to respond to:

02 What I can offer, and what I cannot realistically offer:

03 One short sentence I want to say:

04 A practical step I can control if the limit is not respected:

05 Afterward: What happened? What would I keep or change?

Check before you act: Have I considered safety, dependents, shared responsibilities, work expectations, and any commitments I have already made? I can seek advice without handing over every decision.

BOUNDARIES & GUILT / SOURCES & SUPPORT

A little more support.

- 01 [Centre for Clinical Interventions | Assertiveness resources](#)
- 02 [Centre for Clinical Interventions | How to Say No Assertively](#)
- 03 [Mayo Clinic | Being assertive: Reduce stress, communicate better](#)
- 04 [National Domestic Violence Hotline | Personal safety planning](#)

Source list dated October 8, 2026. Design edition October 13, 2026.

Wherever you are reading from

Wherever you are reading from, your culture, language, beliefs, access needs, and daily circumstances belong in the conversation. Professional titles and services vary between countries. Sources and directories identify their own regions; a local health service or professional regulator can explain the options where you live.

About this guide

These guides offer general education for adults. They do not provide personal therapy, diagnosis, medical advice, or a professional relationship with Diana. A qualified professional who can practice where you live can help you apply information to your circumstances. Changes to prescribed care belong in a conversation with your treating professional.

[Read the full educational disclaimer](#)

If you need urgent support

If you need urgent emotional support in the U.S. or its territories, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers phone, text, and chat support. For immediate danger or a medical emergency, use your local emergency number (911 in the U.S.). Elsewhere, contact a crisis service in your country. The podcast and its messages are not monitored for urgent care.

988lifeline.org/chat/

BOUNDARIES & GUILT / KEEP EXPLORING

One honest sentence is a place to begin.

Look for clearer decisions, fewer automatic commitments, and more consistency with the limits you choose. The first sign of progress may be an honest sentence, even if your voice shakes. If fear or distress keeps interfering, consider professional support. [3]

EPISODE 125

Grief and rebuilding after divorce with Shirley Barthelemy

Divorce, people-pleasing, grief, and rebuilding a sense of self.

[Listen or read the transcript](#)

[Explore finding a therapist who fits](#)



Read, listen, and return at your own pace.

Scan for this guide and its episode links.

theholisticcounselor.com/resources

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