

-- Speaker 1 00:00:26 Welcome to another episode of Dr. MCs self-care cabaret podcast. I'm Theresa Melito-Conners, a PhD level self-care expert in the greater Boston area with a passion for helping others recognize the importance of caring for themselves. For the next couple of episode releases, we are going to mix things up a bit. Instead of the usual format, we are going to share what we are calling bite-sized pods, which will be me, Dr. MC chatting with you about a particular topic. Episodes will continue to drop biweekly on Wednesdays. These will likely be on the shorter side, but with a new school year upon us shorter, maybe just what the doctor ordered. Now we've already discussed mindfulness and the importance of listening to the body and mindful eating in the first two bite-sized pod episodes. Today, we're going to shift a little and talk about mindfulness of our physical time, space, and energy.

Speaker 1 00:01:24 Also known as boundaries. Setting boundaries can be so hard and sometimes rather tricky, but we must put limits on our time and energy toxic people, our work, our friends and family, as this is critical to your wellbeing. And yes, you can put limits and boundaries on family. An emotionally mature person will respect and understand your boundaries. Remember, you cannot control how someone else will react to your boundary setting. And it may be difficult to do this at first, but over time, this does get easier. It really all comes down to this. We don't like disappointing people and we don't like to feel guilty. However, these are not valid reasons to continue down a path that doesn't feel right or is toxic. You have to take control of your health and wellbeing. Boundaries are healthy for you and your energy. I know we want to say yes, we want to continue to give our time and our energy, but it just, you just can't keep doing that.

Speaker 1 00:02:24 I recently had someone say to me about the classic self care cliché that you can't pour from an empty cup. Well, this person took it one step further and said that she never actually empties her own cup. She practices so much self care that her cup is overflowing and that overflow is what she is able to give to others. And I just thought that was such a beautiful reframe. And I've had to work hard in this area too, to set boundaries. And even after years of practice, sometimes I get swept up in something and lose sight of my priorities. This causes me to have to take a step back and reorient myself to my goals and my priorities before I can say yes or do whatever it is that the person is asking me to do. And sometimes I can. And sometimes I can't and you'll find the same for you as well.

Speaker 1 00:03:13 And there are people that no matter what will continue to violate your boundaries, these are toxic people sometimes refer to as energy vampires, but just like everything else. Again, with self care, you get to decide, you take the control, you have the power, you get to prioritize yourself. So we're gonna look at some different types of boundaries as there's several different types. And some of the examples I give are school specific, but these can easily transfer to other workplace settings and areas of your life. Just wanna get those wheels turning for you. Okay? Types of boundaries, we have physical boundaries. Some examples may taking screen breaks throughout the day, taking your lunch break and actually eating your lunch. Maybe asking someone to cover your class or to tap you out of a situation. If you need a moment or telling someone not to touch you or not to, you know, have a public display of affection, you're not into PDAs.

Speaker 1 00:04:16 That's also a physical boundary. Also closing your office or classroom door during your downtimes. If you have breaks or lunch or your prep periods, et cetera, there's also time boundaries. This is where we think about not checking work emails after hours or on weekends or on holidays, maybe asking for clear timelines and deadlines on projects, really prioritizing your to-do list. Not everything is an emergency. Not everything has to get done immediately. Additionally, not signing up for something extra. Maybe it's a committee or whatever it is not doing it saying no, giving yourself 24 hours to respond to an email or a request. We'll talk more about that in a bit. But also when we think about grading assignments, which can be a major time consuming tasks for educat --

-- ors, maybe setting aside a dedicated time that you do that. So it's scheduled you get it done and it doesn't bleed into other areas of your life.

Speaker 1 00:05:22 There's also emotional boundaries telling someone you don't wanna talk about a particular topic at that time or telling someone that you're not the right person for them to speak to about something and stop them from just unloading on you. There's also personal boundaries. Maybe you have a separate phone number for work related calls. Google voice can be great for this or telling someone you don't wanna talk about your personal life with them. Maybe it's not appropriate or just feels too invasive for you. Also leave your work computer at work, sign out of email apps on your phone. So you're not tempted to check work email after hours. There's also material boundaries where we maybe don't let people borrow material possessions or not lend money to people. And there's also mental boundaries. This is where you can agree to disagree on a topic, maybe with a colleague or a friend or a loved one.

Speaker 1 00:06:26 Also only consuming certain types of content. I know for myself, unfollow, unsubscribe, hide people from your timelines. When we think about social media and all that is kind of constantly coming at us on the internet, not allowing yourself to consume content, that's gonna make you feel bad about yourself or make you feel less than, or also again, maybe telling someone you don't wanna talk about a particular topic. Maybe it's an ex-partner or politically charged situations. You don't wanna have those conversations. These can be really great boundaries. So those are several different types of boundaries. You may even be able to think of some additional boundary categories, but now that we understand that there are some different types, and hopefully you're thinking about maybe your own situations and where you could do better at setting some boundaries. Here are some action steps that you can use to practice and reflect on for when you are faced with a situation and you have to set that boundary.

Speaker 1 00:07:27 So first let's say someone asks you to do something. They make a request. And before you just respond with a yes, take some time to consider the consequences of your response by yourself. Some time, this is a great technique. So maybe you say something like I'll need to get back to you on that, or I need to sleep on it. Or one of my favorites, I need to check with my husband or I need to check with. So and so on that before you commit, you can also let the person know that there's a chance you may not be able to do whatever it is that they're asking you to do. You can even say, you know, I've, I've made a recent decision to limit the commitments I make or something along those lines, prepare people early for the possibility that you may not be around next, do a gut check.

Speaker 1 00:08:17 So you've bought yourself some time. Now you're thinking about it. Check in with your body, ask yourself on a scale of one to 10. How much do I really wanna do this? If it's a 10, by all means, go for it or even a nine or an eight, go for it. But if you're unsure, maybe ask yourself. If I knew this person wouldn't be angry, disappointed, or upset would I say no? And we always want to do things for the people we love, but make sure you're not just doing it out of guilt and obligation, but that you're doing it to actually show love and support and to foster connection. So now that you've done that gut check and you've decided that this isn't something you wanna take on, you have to tell the truth directly, do not leave a door open when you need a wall and don't be, wishy-washy use your existing supports.

Speaker 1 00:09:10 Even before you get to this point. If you're still undecided, ask a partner or a trusted friend, a loved one, a therapist, whoever to run scenarios with you and practice what it's gonna be like to tell this person. No, and remember, you cannot control how someone else is gonna react to you, but you can control how you feel about it. And you also don't measure your success by their response. So after you've had the interaction, you've told this person, no check in with yourself again, see how you feel about it. Do you know you've made the right decision? Do you feel relieved? Are you pleased with how you handled the situation? If you even wanna take it one step further, you may wanna journal ab --

-- out it, ask yourself, what did I do that I feel good about what language did I use to state my position and what worked best.

Speaker 1 00:10:09 And is there something you do different if you were faced with the same situation again, and this can be just such a great habit to get into. Some people might get mad. Again, we talked about in the beginning that emotionally mature people are gonna understand this and respect your boundaries, but there are people that, that just won't and that's okay. It's not about them. It's about you never ignore your intuition. You get to prioritize your task and your body will tell you, your gut will tell you when, and if you should take on new requests or if you need to set a boundary. So I hope this is resonating with you, and maybe you need to adopt a new mantra or affirmation for yourself. So I'm gonna share a few and see how these work for you. And maybe if you like it, write it out, print it out, put it as a background on your phone or on your computer.

Speaker 1 00:11:07 Put a sticky note on your mirror, put it wherever you need to be reminded about it. So let's see how we feel about these affirmations and mantras. My boundaries are part of my self-care. Well, personally, I love that one because we know that boundaries are part of self-care. And I'm gonna tell you a little story about that in just a sec or another affirmation might be. I choose who I allow into my life, or maybe setting boundaries does not mean I am selfish. Sometimes when we really get into the nitty gritty of practicing really good foundational self care, we start to feel a little selfish or other people in society will start to make us feel like we're selfish for setting these boundaries. You are not setting boundaries does not mean I am selfish. I cannot control others. Only myself, really important reminder. I am responsible for my own happiness, very true. And I will not allow others hateful words to become my narrative.

Speaker 1 00:12:26 As I was putting together my notes and thoughts and gathering them for this bite's eyes pod episode. I was reminded about how I actually got into self-care and the reason why I wanna do the work that I'm doing and why I am a self-care expert. And it actually is around boundary setting at a job. So I'll tell you a quick story. Years ago, I was fresh outta grad school with my masters, and I was hired at a therapeutic high school as the guidance coordinator. And it was a really intense environment where there were a lot of students we were working with had really challenging mental health issues, early onset psychosis, eating disorders, um, severe depression, social, emotional issues, anxiety, suicide ideation, and gesture. It was, it was a lot. And at first I kind of dove right into this work, but I found myself not having really good boundaries.

Speaker 1 00:13:28 And I would really stress out about my students later and just was really starting to be on a slippery slope, straight to burnout rather quickly. And I went to my, um, program director at the time and I said to her, yikes, like this is a lot. And kind of, you know, told her how I was feeling. And she said, you need to learn to not take this home with you. And at the time I didn't know what that meant. And I also mistakenly thought that I was the only person experiencing this. I figured, oh, well, this just must be a me problem. So I guess I'm gonna have to go solve it. So what it did was it actually set me on the path to start studying self care. And this is where I really dove into the work of Deepak Chopra and Louise hay and Wayne Dyer and Cheryl Richardson and all the other self care experts that have come before me.

Speaker 1 00:14:22 And I realized that it all sort of stemmed from setting boundaries and really having an authentic self care practice. I also quickly realized that this was not just a me problem and that a lot of people really struggled with this. So when it became time, years later and even another job or two after that, where I wanted to study, uh, I wanted to earn my PhD and my area of study. I knew from day one pretty much would be self-care and renewal because this is really something that people really need to understand the importance of. So they can begin to really just get in touch with their bodies and live really happy, healthy, productive lives. Thank you so much for listening. We hope you're enjoying these bite-sized episodes and we'll b

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-- e back with full-sized interviews all too soon. Remember to subscribe and write this podcast on your preferred player and be sure to follow on social media at Dr. MC's self-care episodes drop biweekly on Wednesdays. So we'll see you next time. Stay well and do good.

Are you looking for exciting, engaging, and useful professional development and workshops for your school business or organization? Well, look, no further. Dr. MC offers a variety of options and topics related to self-care and renewal trauma, recovery, building resilience, developing a growth mindset, stress management, and more completely customizable to fit every need. And coming soon is a new program to help high school students manage the challenges they are facing today, and the increasing concerns around mental health visit Dr. MC's self-care dot com to learn more and request a session.

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