

Clear Signs You Need to Set Healthy Boundaries

Does anyone remember the game Red Rover? Our whole 3rd grade class used to line up and play this at recess. Twenty-four rambunctious kids squeezing each other's hands with a sweaty grip of death ... makes me want to break out the hand sanitizer!

I sometimes feel as though, in aiming for a well-balanced life together, my family is engaging in one massive game of Red Rover. There are a million things that want to bust through our line, and it takes effort to hold our links steady. Distractions, obligations, opportunities. We could overbook ourselves in a heartbeat or end up in separate directions if we aren't focused.

As a wife and parent, I set the boundaries. I'm naturally wired to be a people pleaser. It's pretty cute when you're small, teacher's pet and all. But there comes a time in every woman's life where we have to prioritize. Otherwise, we risk going crazy—or dropping the ball that matters most.

In my own life, it came to a head a few years ago. I was super busy being super for everyone. I have to say, it just wasn't all that it was cracked up to be. So many public things got done and so many private things suffered. No matter how strong I appeared, I knew my life lacked joy and my relationships lacked depth. Even my health was suffering. I took a major time out: I quit every extra thing I could and then I went off for a Hawaiian vacation with my family. (Hey, if you have to reset, there is no better place than the beach!)

When we came back home, I set all new parameters that have benefited me for three years now. Here is what healthy boundaries means to me:

- My relationship with God comes first. This means a set

time alone with my Bible, to meditate in the quiet. It helps me be mindful of what direction my life is taking. If our lives lack this element of quiet and reflection, we suffer.

- Next in priority is my family. It's a priceless opportunity to do life not alone, so I invest in them wholeheartedly. We intentionally protect our family time and make it count. I live a life that allows me to be truly present in the moment with each of them.
- No matter where we live, there will be a plethora of opportunities to get involved in our community. Personally, I believe that what makes a person feel joyful and alive is what they're meant to do, after priorities are set.
- It's reckless to throw out priorities in order to seize opportunities. Consider this: if I do everything I want at once, I will be in conflict with my priorities. For me, to be exhausted is to be no longer joyful. I believe I'm going to have a long, full life. I can afford to turn down some options now and keep dreaming for the future.

If you're tired all the time and running more than resting, if you don't connect with each person in your family every day—these are clues. If your life feels bland but you're doing everything “right,” here is your permission slip for time out. I urge you to take it one way or another.

I'm so thankful for the turn my life took, when at last I truly listened to my soul. These boundaries make me strong enough to pursue a life that is wholly amazing, alongside my beautiful family. They are my team. Together, we are choosing who and what gets “sent on over.”

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