

# Practical Boundary Strategies in Legal Work



## Where Lawyers Can Set Boundaries

### With Clients

- Define response times
- Clarify scope of work
- Avoid emotional enmeshment

### With Colleagues

- Protect focus time
- Say no to extra tasks
- Avoid weekend contact

### With Yourself

- Block rest time on calendar
- Set work cutoff hours
- Take real vacation days

## Managing Emotional Labor Without Burnout

- **It's not your job to emotionally absorb your clients' pain.**
- Boundaries include:
  - Not oversharing your own struggles
  - Redirecting emotional venting back to legal process
  - Protecting your emotional bandwidth for your life outside of work

## ◆ Scripts for Client Boundaries

### 1. When a client expects 24/7 availability:

"I want to give your matter the attention it deserves. I respond to messages during business hours, Monday through Friday, and will get back to you as soon as I'm able within that timeframe."

### 2. When a client overshares or treats you like a therapist:

"I hear that you're going through a lot. While I'm here to guide you through the legal aspects, I encourage you to seek emotional support from a therapist or counselor if you haven't already."

### 3. When a client is disrespectful or verbally aggressive:

"I'm committed to helping you, and I expect our conversations to be respectful. If that's not possible today, let's continue this at another time."

## ◆ Scripts for Professional Boundaries with Yourself

### 4. When you're tempted to keep working after hours:

"I've done enough for today. Overworking leads to burnout, and I'm a better advocate when I'm rested and clear-headed."

### 5. When you need to say no to another commitment (even a 'good' one):

"That sounds like a great opportunity, and I'm honored you asked — but I need to decline so I can focus fully on my current responsibilities."

## ◆ Scripts for Colleague or Workplace Boundaries

### 6. When a colleague tries to delegate work that isn't yours:

"I'm at full capacity with my own caseload, so I won't be able to take that on. I recommend checking with [appropriate party] to reassign or reschedule."

**7. When you want to protect your downtime or lunch break:** "I'm stepping away for lunch and will be offline for the next hour. I'll follow up on this afterward."

### 8. When asked to stay late or work a weekend with no notice:

"I understand this is time-sensitive, but I already have plans outside work hours. I'm happy to help tomorrow during business hours or help identify another resource."

## ◆ Scripts for Personal Boundaries (Family, Friends, etc.)

### 9. When a family member asks for free legal advice:

"I care about you and want you to get the best support possible — but this situation deserves formal attention. I recommend you speak with an attorney who can review the details thoroughly."

### 10. When you're being guilt-tripped for not being available:

"I know it's disappointing when I can't show up the way you want — and I also need to prioritize my well-being and energy right now."

## Boundary Strategy Worksheet for Lawyers

**My top 3 professional values are:** e.g., clarity, integrity, balance



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**One current boundary that's weak or missing:** e.g., I answer emails after hours



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# Boundary Strategy Worksheet for Lawyers

**New boundary I want to set:** e.g., No work email after 6 p.m.

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**How I'll communicate this:** e.g., "To protect my focus and well-being, I respond during business hours"

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**One emotional boundary I will set:** e.g., I will not carry my client's emotions after hours

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**Support I need to hold this boundary:** e.g., accountability, calendar blocks, supervisor awareness

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