Have you ever been around a really persistent child?

The one who wants the candy bar at the grocery store or 20 more minutes on the video game. Or a little less homework this weekend. They can be really persistent.

And if they catch us at the right moment, or maybe the wrong moment, and we just can't take it anymore, we say,

Fine! I'll get you the candy bar.

Okay! 20 more minutes and that's it.

Fine! No homework this weekend but this is the last time.

But the kids know that's not true, right?

We've shown them that we're willing to bend and and sometimes break when it comes to our boundaries. There's no reason for them not to try it again.

When we become adults, we don't lose a lot of who we were as children and this premise holds true when it comes to your staff.

They're not going to bug you for a candy bar in the grocery store or 20 more minutes on a video game, but they are going to ask for things again and again to see where your boundaries are and how willing you are to bend them.

So what we're going to talk about today is the importance of setting good, solid boundaries and enforcing them because most of us are pretty good at the setting. It's the enforcing where we get into trouble.

It matters because you need some peace of mind and you need to set yourself up for success when it comes to your work.

If you have boundaries around when staff can contact you or what they can reach out to you for or you've explained something to them over and over and over again, or they're asking for your permission or or input on something you've already given them clearance to do- all those little incidents throughout the day add up and it's going to take away from your ability to do your job as successfully as you can.

You need to have those boundaries in place and you need to understand your role in all of this. It's very easy to blame the other person.

Well, I told them not to text me anymore.

I told them not to call me on the weekend.

I told them not to come to my office all the time.

But if you keep indulging what they're asking then they're going to continue doing it.

So yes, they have a level of responsibility in that interaction and you do too.

When it comes to setting boundaries, what is challenging about that for you?

For many people, they don't like to say no or they don't want people to be mad at them or they want their staff to like them or they want to show their staff- and not just staff.

Colleagues, your boss, anybody you're working with- how dedicated you are.

Figure out what it is for you and how can you shift that mindset to make it better serve you?

You need to be clear when you're setting a boundary.

You need to be clear and you need to make sure that the other person understands the boundary you're setting.

Where we get into trouble sometimes is in how we're explaining the boundary and the words that we use.

We might say something like, 'you need to act professionally' or 'you need to speak respectfully' or 'you need to wear appropriate clothing'.

Those words are really subjective.

You might say that, and your staff might hear you but your interpretation of what that means is very different. Drill down on it and make it as clear and specific as you possibly can. Of course, there are always new ones.

You're never going to policy away every situation that might arise but do try to be as specific as you can and again be consistent both with that person and with other people too, because if you're setting up boundaries for one person that don't exist for another, then that's going to cause some problems.

People are going to think you're playing favorites or 'why are you picking on me?' kind of thing. Be clear and consistent. Stop doing these things that are blurring boundaries between your work life, and your not work life.

Stop emailing at midnight or Sunday afternoon or 4 AM or whenever you're out of work time. Emailing is like number one. Even though- and I've heard this many times- you can work better from home or you just like to stay caught up on things or you don't mind doing it.

Maybe you can carry that out as long as you're working, but for most people, there

comes a time when it really, really burns them out.

So you need to have a break from work.

Secondly, you're sending a message to your staff that working outside of work time is expected. Even if you tell them it's not or they shouldn't. They're watching what you do, not what you say. If they get an email from you at midnight now all of a sudden they're like, 'do I have to respond? and 'Am I supposed to be emailing at midnight?' You're teaching them how to operate based on what you're showing.

Stop saying you have an open door policy.

 1) It's impossible to have an open door policy in the truest sense.

You can't always respond to everything everybody needs at any given moment nor should you. Instead of having an open door policy, think like a professor and a hotel guest. Put up the do not disturb sign when you need an uninterrupted time. Your staff does not need access to you every minute of every day.

When you need dedicated time or uninterrupted time to work on something, let them know not to contact you for the next 90 minutes or every Wednesday at 4 o'clock or whatever time you need. It's okay to do that.

You're setting up an expectation that they're allowed to do that too when they need dedicated time to work on something.

Then, like a college professor, you can have your office hours and that can be your open door, But it shouldn't be every minute of every day.

When it comes to your work schedule, stop cramming it with back to back to back meetings, not giving you any time to reflect or prepare for the next one. Or to think or prepare. When you're just constantly on the go, you're not bringing your best self to these spaces because you don't have time to reflect and you don't have time to prepare.

Schedule space in between these meetings and tasks to reflect and time to to prepare for the next one. This could also just include thinking time. I know that feels kind of weird to put that in a schedule but it's so valuable.

Maybe even get out of the office and take a walk and clear your head or have a conversation with someone or do some reading about something you're curious about when it comes to work.That's work too, and it's really valuable.

Stop breaking your own boundaries. If you tell yourself, 'I'm not working weekends anymore' and then you hear your phone pinging, and you say 'well, I'll just check this one email' or 'I'll just make this one phone call', it's a real slippery slope.

 Before you know it you're back to where you said you didn't want to be.

Don't break your own boundaries. When boundaries are broken, how you handle it is really important.

For starters don't assume the reason.

A lot of times you get into your own feelings and we project that on to the person breaking the boundaries. We think things like: *they're so rude* or *they don't even listen* or *they don't care about my time* or whatever negative story we tell ourselves.

Let that nonsense go. Don't assume the reason. You don't have to assume the reason. You can ask the other person.

'You know, we met last week, (last month, whatever) and I thought we were on the same page about not texting me after nine o'clock. Could you tell me what happened?'

Give them a chance to respond.

'Oh, I forgot' or 'I thought it was an emergency'.

Give them the opportunity not to defend themselves just to explain themselves. You can understand what went wrong and how to fix it going forward.

Don't tell the dramatic story. Don't tell the, 'oh, and I work so hard and my staff and my boss and nobody respects my boundaries.'

Save the drama for your mama, alright?!

Focus on what works and when the boundaries are broken have that respectful conversation with one another so you can get back on track. Find out what happened, reinforce the expectation and make sure again you're on the same page.

 Make sure they understand what that page looks like. If it's something that's happening repeatedly, there is a glitch in the system.

Is it lack of clarity?

Is it something that they are willfully ignoring?

If there need to be consequences then that's something to consider.

Also be really clear about what those consequences are.

So, the most important question for you is, what boundaries do you need to set up and enforce to be more successful?