

Time to Set Boundaries!

**A Companion Booklet
to Episode 3
of
THE KAREN SCHAAL
PODCAST**

**Created by Karen Schaal
A Science and Gratitude Approach
Powered by People Owned Psychology™**



Welcome!

This booklet is part of the Brilliance Series, a five-part collection accompanying Episodes 1–5 of The Karen Schaal Podcast.

Each booklet is designed to help you reconnect with your innate brilliance, not through inspiration alone, but through tools rooted in biology, psychology, and gratitude-based science.

In this edition, we explore the sacred role of boundaries. Not the kind built on guilt or fear, but the kind that quietly protect your clarity, energy, and identity.

You'll be guided through simple practices that restore what overextension often steals - your inner steadiness. Because when your boundaries are honored,

Let it land.
This is how you protect your peace.



Time to Set Boundaries!

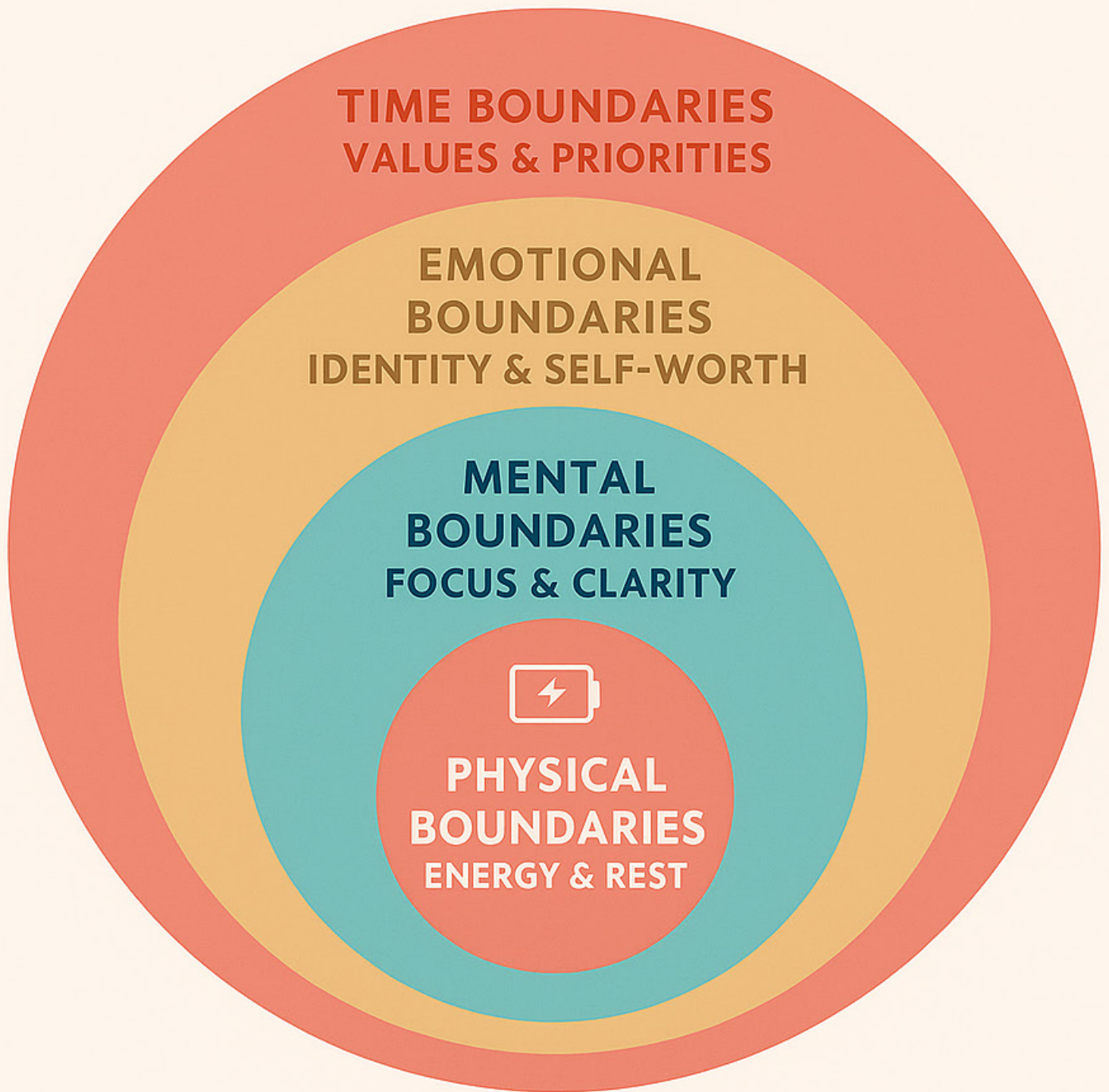
Your energy is precious, but without boundaries, it leaks. From cultural pressure to be endlessly available, to the quiet guilt of saying no, we're taught that overextending is noble. But here's the truth: boundaries don't block your brilliance, they protect it.

Boundaries aren't just about time or space. They're how your body and brain signal what matters. When you honor those signals, you reclaim more than energy - you reclaim your identity.

This booklet invites you to examine where your limits live, and what it might feel like to hold them with confidence.

The following infographic highlights just a few lesser-known ways your body and brain naturally support your ability to protect your peace.

YOUR BODY & BRAIN KNOW BOUNDARIES MATTER



You can care deeply
without carrying it all.

Reconnecting with Your Brilliance

These practices are designed to help you reconnect with yourself. You'll find them throughout the Brilliance Series, and you can incorporate them i'nto your routine in ways that feel natural.

Use them one at a time, or combine them as they resonate with you. Let them evolve with you. Let them remind you of your brilliance.

1

Breathe

A Moment
of Noticing



2

Move

Awareness
in Action



3

Reflect

A Quiet
Discovery



4

Observe

Intelligence
in the Environment



5

Appreciate

Gratitude
as Connection



Breathe



Sit quietly. Let your body settle.
Close your eyes
and take a slow, deep breath in.

As you inhale, imagine drawing
a gentle, but firm boundary
around yourself - a quiet, steady
no that says: I matter.

Exhale softly.
Feel your shoulders drop.
With that breath out,
release the pressure to explain,
to prove, to please.

Let your yes rise. Yes to rest.
Yes to space.
Yes to what nourishes you.

Breathe in - a boundary forming.
Breathe out - a return to peace.

Each breath is a quiet reminder.
You are worthy
of the space you need.

Move



Stand comfortably with your feet shoulder width apart. Extend your arms straight out to your sides, palms open.

Slowly turn in a full circle. Notice the space around you. This is your personal boundary.

Now gently press your hands forward, as if signaling “this is far enough.”

Feel the strength in your arms, the clarity in your stance. Bend your elbows and draw your hands back toward your chest.

This is your inner space.

Repeat this motion a few times. Extend, define, return.

Reflect



Take a quiet moment with pen and paper. Where in your life have boundaries nourished you, helped you to feel safe, clear, and whole?

And where have they been unclear, absent, or crossed? Were there times you felt drained, overlooked, or even wounded from saying yes when you meant no?

Look gently at the moments when holding a boundary gave you strength and the moments that left you empty, hurt, or confused.

You may notice patterns. You may meet old stories. That's okay.

This reflection isn't about blame, it's about awareness. It's about noticing what you need to feel rooted, steady, and well.

Let this page hold your truth.

Observe



Spend today simply noticing boundaries in the natural world. Healthy boundaries create structure, rhythm, and space for life to grow. They are not walls, they are edges. Edges that hold, protect, and define.

As you move through your day, notice how life honors limits.

The way branches stop where light no longer reaches.

The way flowers close when the sun goes down. The way birds return to the nest at dusk.

Let the world show you. Boundaries aren't harsh. They're wise.

Appreciate



Today, practice appreciating the boundaries that support your well-being. The ones you've set and the ones you're still learning to hold.

Boundaries aren't a failure of connection; they're what make connection possible and appreciation turns boundaries from something you have to do, into something you can honor.

Take a quiet moment to name a boundary that protects your peace. A boundary that protects your time, energy, and space. Be grateful .

The more you value your boundaries, the more naturally they hold.

This is how you protect what matters.

Why These Practices Work

Boundaries aren't just something you set with others - they're something you return to within yourself. These five practices are designed to do just that. They help you pause, notice, and reset before the world pulls you too far off course.

The practices in this booklet are rooted in evidence-based research. Science continues to confirm that the five areas of focus:

- intentional breath
- movement
- reflection
- observation
- appreciation

can support emotional regulation, cognitive clarity, physical healing, and deeper connection; helping to reset the nervous system and support emotional focus and balance.

In a culture that rewards overextension, these practices offer a different path: one grounded in awareness. They remind you that you're allowed to pause and protect your space.

On the following pages, you'll learn how each practice works in the mind and body demonstrating how small, intentional choices can reduce overwhelm, build clarity, and reinforce the boundaries that support your well-being.

Why These Practices Work

1. Breathe - Space for Stillness

When you practice intentional breathing—especially slow, steady exhales—you send a direct calming signal through your nervous system. This activates the vagus nerve, which helps regulate heart rate, lower blood pressure, and reduce the release of stress hormones like cortisol.

It's one of the most accessible and immediate ways to shift your body out of a stress state and into a mode of restoration. You're not just relaxing . . . you're re-balancing your internal systems.

Over time, this simple, repeated act has been shown to lower anxiety, improve emotional regulation, and increase resilience. In moments of overwhelm, the breath creates a buffer, a pause that protects your clarity, helps reset your boundaries, and restores a sense of control.

Research

Balban, M. Y., Neri, E., Kogon, M. M., Weed, L., Nouriani, B., Jo, B., Holl, G., Zeitzer, J. M., Spiegel, D., & Huberman, A. D. (2023). Brief structured respiration practices enhance mood and reduce physiological arousal. *Cell reports. Medicine*, 4(1), 100895. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xcrm.2022.100895>

Why These Practices Work

2. Move -Energy reclaimed.

When you move, especially after sitting too long, you shake your brain out of autopilot. Physical activity, even in a single burst of moderate effort like a brisk walk or a few stretches, increases blood flow and oxygen to the prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that handles focus, planning, decision-making, and filtering distractions.

A recent lab study found that just 20 minutes of moderate exercise, like cycling, boosts self-control and working memory immediately after the activity.

By tuning into your body and taking that break, you interrupt the loop of mindless distraction, quiet mental clutter, and return with greater clarity and ease.

Small, intentional movement choices don't just energize your body—they restore your capacity to focus, follow through, and hold healthy boundaries.

Research

Martini, M., Enoch, J., & Kramer, A. F. (2024). The effects of a short exercise bout on executive functions in healthy older adults. *Scientific reports*, 14(1), 28827. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-79685-5>

Why These Practices Work

3. Reflect - Deepening awareness and choice.

Reflection helps you recognize when a boundary is needed and when one has been crossed. Without pausing to reflect, it's easy to override your own limits or miss the signs that something doesn't feel right.

When you take time to name what's working and what's not, you gather the clarity needed to make better decisions; what to say yes to, what to walk away from, and what to protect.

Even a few minutes of mindful reflection improves emotional regulation, strengthens focus, and reduces reactivity. It creates space between stimulus and response, so your boundaries aren't just reactions, they're thoughtful, grounded choices. So how often are you honoring your yes, your no, and your need for space?

Research

Walsh, Megan & Carleton, Erica & Ortynsky, Mikaila & Choi, Ellen & Hancock, Amanda & Arnold, Kara. (2025). The role of daily mindfulness on work-home conflict: a daily study of women leaders. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*. 10.1108/EDI-02-2024-0075.

Why These Practices Work

4. Observe - Wisdom in limits.

When boundaries break down—rivers overflow, forests lose structure, or workplaces bleed into every hour—stress, dysfunction, and anxiety follow. Observing how nature and people suffer, without clear limits, makes the need for our own boundaries impossible to ignore.

By witnessing disorder—whether in your environment or in your energy—you gain clarity on why boundaries matter. Research shows that individuals with weak emotional boundaries experience higher levels of stress and relationship dissatisfaction.

Boundaries don't restrict you; they stabilize you. That awareness makes it easier to choose where you draw your lines and why those lines deserve protection.

It makes sense, doesn't it? When chaos builds inside or out, imbalance follows. Boundaries help hold the structure your mind needs to stay steady and well.

Research

Helbich, M. (2018). Mental Health and Environmental Exposures: An Editorial. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(10), 2207. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15102207>

Why These Practices Work

5. Appreciate - Protection with purpose.

Appreciation shifts how you see boundaries, from unwanted rules to practices that protect your peace. When you value what a boundary gives you - more energy, more clarity, more time, you're less likely to abandon it. Gratitude re-frames limits as something you choose, not something imposed. Each limit you hold creates room for what truly belongs in your life. That simple shift builds consistency, self-respect, and resilience, with research also reporting greater self-esteem, improved decision-making, and better emotional regulation.

Appreciation turns boundaries into a form of abundance because they protect the space where your life can thrive. When you set a boundary, you're not operating from scarcity you're acting from worth. You're not withdrawing from life when you set a boundary—you're protecting the conditions that allow you to fully engage in it. Appreciation reinforces the boundary and the reason behind it. It says this matters and so do I.

Research

Diniz, G., Korkes, L., Tristão, L. S., Pelegrini, R., Bellodi, P. L., & Bernardo, W. M. (2023). The effects of gratitude interventions: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Einstein (Sao Paulo, Brazil)*, 21, eRW0371. https://doi.org/10.31744/einstein_journal/2023RW0371

Congratulations!

If you made it here,
you've done more than just reflect.
You listened to your limits.
You honored your energy.
You took your peace seriously.
That matters.

In a world that celebrates burnout,
you chose protection.
You chose clarity.
You chose yourself.

Whether this is your first step toward holding boundaries
or a return to what you've always known,
thank you for walking this path with me.

Keep choosing what restores you.
Your time is yours to protect.
Your energy is yours to honor.
This isn't selfish.

Each boundary you hold shapes the life you're building.

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About the Author

Karen Schaal is the founder of People Owned Psychology™, a science- and gratitude-based platform devoted to expanding the mind and growing the heart. Her approach helps people embrace their personal brilliance by developing awareness - of themselves and the psychological processes that shape our experience. Karen believes that when we make intentional choices toward goodness, by seeking out the good in ourselves, in others, and in the world, we grow into the fullness of who we were meant to be.