

BEAT TEACHER
BURNOUT
WITH **BETTER**
BOUNDARIES

Grace Stevens

Companion
Workbook



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Red Lotus Books

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DISCLAIMER:

This workbook offers information for educational purposes only. Nothing should be construed as medical or therapeutic advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Introduction

Use these first few pages to take notes as you read the book.

Reflection questions to consider in each section:

1. What resonated with me most in this section?
2. How much of this do I feel applies to me?
3. What action steps should I consider after reading this section?
4. On a scale of 1-10 how confident am I with my boundary setting skills in this area?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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Boundary Goals

INSTRUCTIONS:

In the spaces below, reflect on what you want to establish as your boundary goals in each appropriate area. If you have never given any thought to boundaries before, understand that this will likely be a “living document” that you will add to over time. Challenge yourself to come up with at least one or two boundaries for each area.

Remember to differentiate between:

Preferences (P) which can be temporarily flexible based on the situation and
Non-Negotiables (NN) which are fixed boundaries/deal breakers

For example:

Not working weekends may be a **PREFERENCE**. You don't bring work home or answer emails on the weekend. However, if it's an annual fundraiser or special event you want to support, you will participate without feeling put upon.

Whereas:

Not allowing a parent to yell or belittle you is a **NON-NEGOTIABLE**. You will professionally terminate a call or meeting if a parent is unable to control themselves and be respectful.

Boundaries I want to set on the **amount of time I work:**

Circle One ↓

1. _____ P NN
2. _____ P NN
3. _____ P NN
4. _____ P NN
5. _____ P NN

Boundary Goals

Boundaries I want to set with **co-workers/colleagues**:

Circle One ↓

1. _____ P NN
2. _____ P NN
3. _____ P NN
4. _____ P NN
5. _____ P NN

Boundaries I want to set with **students**:

1. _____ P NN
2. _____ P NN
3. _____ P NN
4. _____ P NN
5. _____ P NN

Boundaries I want to set with **parents**:

1. _____ P NN
2. _____ P NN
3. _____ P NN
4. _____ P NN
5. _____ P NN

Yes/No Framework

By saying YES to this:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



I'm saying NO to this:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

By saying NO to this:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



I'm saying YES to this:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

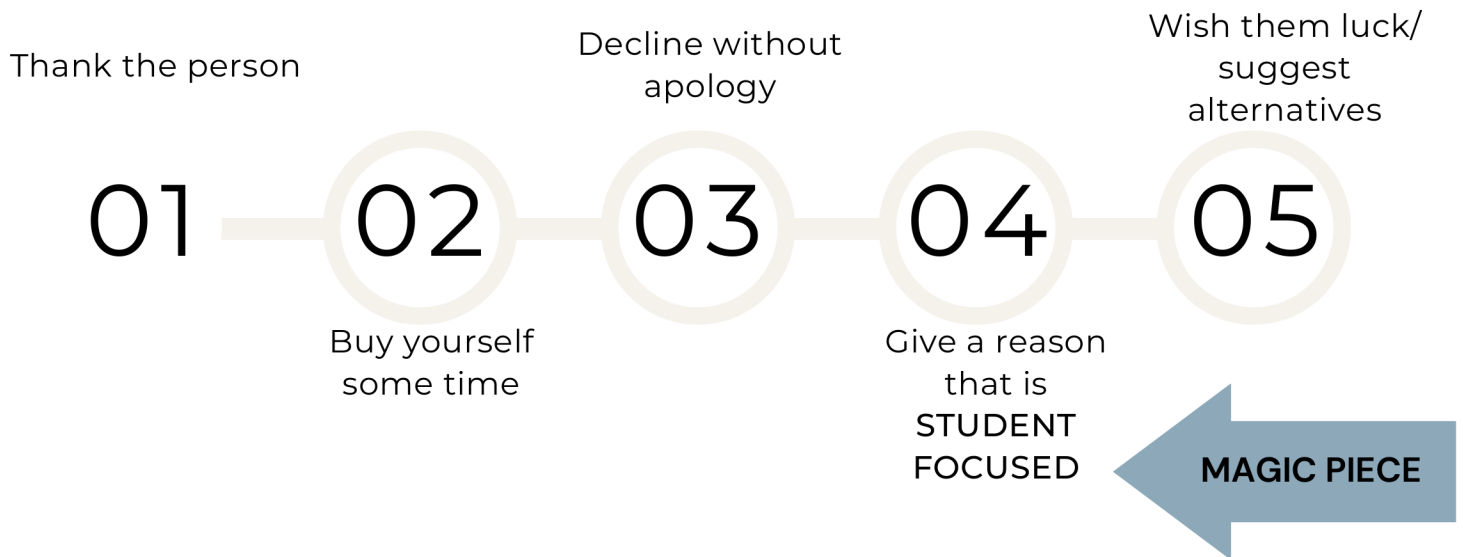
Extra Duties Inventory

Make a list of all of the “extra” duties that you are currently involved in that go above and beyond your contractual obligations. For each one answer the questions. This should give you a “snap shot” of your current commitments.

Type of Commitment	Stipend Y/N Amount	Scale 1-10 of your PASSION for this	Committed through the end of the year? Y/N

Take a realistic look at this snapshot. Be honest about whether the committees and activities add joy and satisfaction to your life or leave you feeling depleted and resentful.

Declining "Professionally"



01

"Thank you for thinking of me."

02

"Let me give the matter some thought and get back to you."

03

"I am unable to take on this extra duty/committee at this time."

04

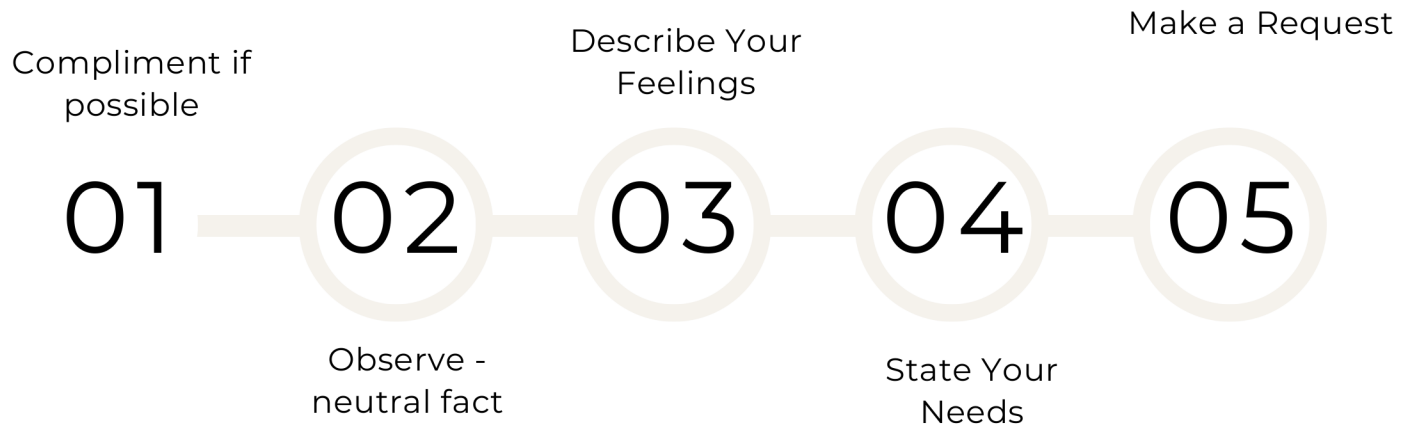
"As this year is a new grade assignment for me, I need to put all of my extra time and energy into understanding the curriculum to best meet the needs of my students."

05

"Best of luck with the committee/event."

Non-Violent Communication*

*based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg



01

"You know how I love chatting with you."

02

"When we start chatting we seem to lose track of time."

03

"I feel frustrated when I don't make maximum use of my prep period."

04

"It's important to me to be as productive as possible at work so that I can leave school at a reasonable hour."

05

"How about if we reserve all of our catching up for a Wednesday lunch date every week?"

The Scripts at a Glance

Scripts for Saying “No” at School

"As you may be aware, this is my first year in this particular grade assignment. I feel I owe it to my students to spend any additional time I have gaining a firmer grasp of the required curriculum so that I can best support their academic success."

"This year, I find myself in a challenging situation where many of my students struggle with the skills they need to succeed in this grade. I will be dedicating any extra time I have to develop and implement interventions that help remediate their academic deficiencies." (Note - extra credit if you can get as many educational buzzwords into your reason for declining).

"As you may remember, we had a lot of turnover in this grade span this year, and I am now the senior member of the team. I am obliged to devote much of my extracurricular time to training the new teachers on specific lesson planning, data collection, assessments, and interventions that we use. I feel this area of responsibility should be my main focus to ensure the success of all students in this grade."

Example of an email:

Dear Principal:

Thank you for your invitation to represent our school at the district-wide curriculum committee.

As it turns out, I am unable to participate this year.

You may remember that....(student-centered reason)

I am confident that many other qualified staff members can effectively represent our school and ensure that the committee is successful.

Respectfully,

A teacher who is learning to set healthy and guilt-free boundaries.

Remember the steps

1. Buy yourself time
2. Reply in writing
3. Decline (no need to apologize) Remember our magic phrase, "As it turns out..."
4. Give a STUDENT FOCUSED reason
5. Offer an alternative, if appropriate
6. Wish them luck

Scripts for Co-Workers

Time Suckers

"Hey, Susie, you know I love chatting with you. I have so much to do today, and I promised myself I would focus during my prep period. Let's set a timer for 5 minutes to catch up. Or how about we catch up at lunch on Wednesday?"

"Is this something you need right now, or can we discuss it on Wednesday?" If something couldn't wait, I would set a specific time and timeframe to address the issue. For example, "I can dedicate 5 minutes of my prep period to show you."

Toxic Complainers

"Gosh, that sounds hard. Listen, I need to get to a meeting/yard duty/the office, but I hope your day gets better!"

"Goodness, it sounds like that student is challenging. That's so hard. I have to get going, but I hope tomorrow is better. Get some good rest tonight!"

Bossy Boots

"I feel disrespected when I am interrupted and when my ideas are immediately dismissed. I have as much to offer as everyone else on this team. I need to feel heard and respected. If I continue to be interrupted, I will request for this meeting to be continued via email." or "If I continue to feel invalidated, I will request a member of HR or admin sit in our next meeting."

Scripts for Co-Workers

The Gossip

"I feel uncomfortable listening to gossip about our co-worker. Can we talk about something else?" or

"I prefer to focus on my work and not get involved in gossip. Can we please talk about something else?"

"I'm happy to talk about work-related topics, but let's avoid discussing our co-workers in a negative way."

"It's important to respect our co-workers and their privacy. Gossiping about them just doesn't sit well with me."

"I understand that you may have a different perspective, but I need to set this boundary for myself. I don't want to continue this conversation about our co-worker."

"That sounds hard. Have you tried talking to them directly?"

Scripts for Parents of Students

Scenario: the parent wants to meet without an appointment

"I understand that you would like to discuss this right now. As it turns out, I have a full schedule today. I would be happy to schedule a time to meet with you to give this matter the time and attention it needs and to ensure student confidentiality. I have office hours available on Wednesday afternoon. If we need to talk before then, I will check my schedule and email you some options tomorrow morning. Or you could address the matter by email. If you feel the matter is urgent or a safety concern, I encourage you to talk to the office. I am committed to your child's success, and I'm confident we can work this out."

Scenario: the parent who is questioning a grade.

"Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I understand that you are concerned about your child's grade. So am I! While grades are important, focusing on your child's effort and progress is also important. I have spent a lot of time providing constructive and detailed feedback to your child in class and have given them the time and opportunity to revise and improve their grade. Once you have discussed this with your child, let me know if you would like to schedule a quick phone call. We can discuss how we can work together to ensure your child gets all the support they need, taking responsibility for their effort, and how we can work together to ensure their success. Here are three 15-minute time slots that I have available this week."

Scripts for Parents of Students

Scenario: the parent who wants last-minute work or a last-minute independent study.

"Thanks for reaching out to me. That's great to learn you are going to Disneyland for a week. What a fun experience for you all! Please refer to the school policy on requesting independent studies. As teachers have many responsibilities and packed schedules, the school has a policy that requires advance notice for additional work requests. I am unable to produce an independent study by tomorrow. Please check with the office as to what they suggest your child does to complete the missing work on their return. In the meantime, here are some additional online resources your child can access. I hope you have a great trip and make many precious memories."

Scenario: the parent who wants information so they can confront another student or parent about bullying.

"Thank you for reaching out to me. As a teacher, it's my responsibility to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all my students. I take all reports of bullying seriously and will address any concerns or incidents that come to my attention. If your child has experienced or witnessed bullying, please encourage them to speak with another trusted adult or me so that we can take appropriate action. I am happy to work with your child to resolve this issue and to get administrators involved if the situation warrants this. The school has protocols in place and will communicate with the necessary students and parents. Per school policy, I am unable to disclose personal information about other students or parents, and it's important to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals involved.

If you have additional concerns, I encourage you to contact the office."

Scripts for Parents of Students

Scenario: the parent who wants to be your "friend" on social media.

"Thank you for reaching out to me. I understand that you would like to connect with me on social media. As a teacher, I need to maintain professional boundaries with my students and their parents. While I'm happy to communicate with you through email or other school-approved channels, I prefer to keep my personal life private and do not accept social media friend requests from parents. Please don't take this personally, as this is a universal boundary I have set for myself after seeing some negative things happen to co-workers. Of course, if you have any concerns or questions about your child's education, please don't hesitate to reach out to me through email or phone. You can also schedule a meeting with me through the school's scheduling system. I am fully committed to student success and will always support them and you in a professional capacity."

Scenario: the parent who is becoming hostile or says, "I'm a taxpayer; you work for me!"

"I notice that you seem very upset. I understand that you may have strong feelings about your child's education, but it's not appropriate for you to speak to me in a hostile or aggressive manner. I too am a taxpayer. Technically speaking, I work for a school district. If there are specific policies that you disagree with, I encourage you to participate in parent club and school board meetings. We are always in need of passionate individuals. If you would like to discuss concerns about your child with me, I encourage you to schedule an appointment. I would be happy to talk with you when you (or we) have calmed down and can talk respectfully and professionally. I am stepping away from this conversation until we can discuss this in an appropriate manner."

Scripts for Students

Scenario: a student is talking back to you in class.

"I sense you are getting frustrated. It's okay to be frustrated, but it's not okay to talk to me disrespectfully. We will both step away from this conversation for a few minutes. At that time, if you are still disrespectful to me, (state your consequence)."

"I sense you are overwhelmed/frustrated/ not in agreement with me (whatever the situation is). It's okay to be overwhelmed but it's not to talk to me in a disrespectful tone. I am stepping away, and we will continue this conversation during recess/lunch/after school."

Scenario: a student asks to connect with you on social media.

"That's nice of you to ask. However, as your teacher, I need to maintain professional boundaries with students. I'm happy to communicate with you through email or other school-approved channels for academic purposes.

Please don't take it personally. I value my privacy and have a policy of not accepting social media friend requests from students or parents. "

Scenario: a student asking you overly personal questions.

"I understand that you may be curious about my personal life, but respecting my boundaries is important. I only share what I feel is appropriate about my private life. I'm here to support you and your learning, and I'm happy to answer any questions you have about the course material or other academic topics."