



July 27, 2023

## *“How is this okay?”*

How often do you utter this phrase - or something similar - during the course of your work day?

Maybe you have experienced something along the lines of:

- ⚠️ Your manager emailing you on a Sunday with an urgent request.
- ⚠️ An internal client pressing you to help out with an emergency project (and giving little to no context about it).
- ⚠️ A top level executive arriving late to their own meeting... which then runs over... making you late to your next meeting...

All of the above come up in coaching sessions I have with my clients time and again.

And all of the above have happened to me over the course of my career.

What I’ve noticed is, each of us goes through various physical symptoms when these situations arise:

- 😞 Stomach ache.
- 😞 Headache.
- 😞 Racing heart.

Hmm... sounds a lot like anxiety! 😓

In my case, I have never made it a secret that I am a people pleaser. I have always felt most at ease when everyone around me is happy.

Therefore, when situations that felt out of my control arose, I rarely created boundaries, and I let my anxiety run the show in fear of letting someone else down.

Well, as you can imagine, this led to more problems, instead of the intended effect - lessening them.

### **The "Universal" Problem 🌍**

I will never forget being on vacation with my husband and son at Universal Orlando 5 years ago. I was SVP of Research and Strategy at the time. My job was stressful to say the least, and let me tell you, I desperately needed that time off.

Waiting in line for a ride with my son, my cell phone rang. It was a peer of mine in another department who said she needed my help immediately with a work emergency. She knew I was on vacation and apologized for interrupting me, but my assistance was crucial.

So what did I do? I grabbed my son's hand and took him out of line so that I could take this call. And what I began to absorb as we started chatting was:

- ① One of my exceptionally bright Research colleagues was with her to discuss the "emergency."
- ② There was quite literally no way I'd be able to help hands on from my vacation, and
- ③ I had greatly disappointed my son. 😞

All of this, because I was terrible at setting boundaries.

What I should have realized before I went into people pleasing mode was that I was incredibly fortunate to have a staff that could take the reins when I'm out of the office.

(If you don't mind me tooting my own horn, part of what made me a competent leader is that I had helped shape a team I could trust to get the job done in my absence.)

Most importantly, I determined that by simply answering that call to begin with, I risked giving up precious time with my son that we rarely had together because of the demands of my job. There were too few moments in my life as a busy executive that afforded me uninterrupted, quality time with my family, one of my most important values. And I wasn't going to let this happen again.

### **Lesson Learned... and Boundary Set.**

Rest assured, the “emergency” got handled by those who were on the clock back in New York, and as soon as I returned to the office, the first thing I did was put in a request for a work phone, separating it from my personal phone. 📱 + 📱 = 🧘

By setting this important boundary, I was guaranteeing myself a way to make a change on my next family vacation: sure, the people pleaser in me would probably have me check my work phone in the morning (and maybe at night?), but from that point on, that phone would stay locked in the hotel room safe for the majority of the day, “emergencies” be damned.



Universal Studios Orlando, November 2018

How do you know when a value is being stepped on, and what is a boundary you can create in order to operate in a way that is more aligned with your values?

Reply to this email and let me know! I'd love to hear from you.

With gratitude, Tracy

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