Setting Boundaries and Saying No

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Faculty Learning Outcomes (FLOs)

By the end of the session, participants will:

1

Craft a personal “scope of practice”

2

Create a plan to schedule time for priority tasks

3

Practice saying no

Opening question

What are things or requests that you have trouble saying “no” to (but later regret)?

If time: turn to a partner and briefly discuss.

Personal Scope of Practice

In medicine

“…those activities that a person licensed to practice as a health professional is permitted to perform.”

American Medical Association, 2022

In higher education

We put ourselves, the institution, and students at risk if we act outside our role.

a higher education faculty member should not act as a student’s mental health counselor; a student affairs practitioners should not act as campus police.

Activity: Define your personal scope of practice

Use the journal prompts on your worksheet.

Journal prompts (1 of 3)

1. Does your professional role have a code of ethics or standards of behavior? You might find those defined by the professional association for your field. If yes, list them.

2. What is the scope of your role at the institution? You might look to your job description but also consider the responsibilities of the department your role resides in and traditional practices at your university.

3. Are there things that you sometimes feel pressure to do, either from students or colleagues or because you feel like other spaces aren't doing this well, but they are outside the legal and professional definitions of your role? List those on a separate page.

Journal prompts (2 of 3)

4

What are the nonnegotiables in your professional life, or even the things that would help you to disconnect from work in ways that allow you to support yourself?

- Starting and stopping times for work
- How you are comfortable being contacted (email, text?)
- How you'd prefer to schedule meetings (and to meet)
- What you are comfortable sharing (and not sharing) with those around you

Journal prompts (3 of 3)

5

What type of service am I required and qualified to do?

6

What are my research interests, broadly defined?

Create your Scope of Practice

Take the items in 1, 2, and 3 and create a scope of practice using a bulleted list (or other style as you prefer) that outlines your scope of practice.

Reflect

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Do any of the things you have trouble saying “no” to fall outside your personal scope of practice?

Creating an Ideal Schedule

Journaling questions (1 of 2)

1. When are you expected to be in the office?

2. When are you available for meetings? When do you need to stop checking email for the day?

3. What are the expectations of your role as written in your job description and employee handbook regarding availability?

4. When do you need to be available to support your students? When are they available? How (virtual, in person)?

Journaling questions (2 of 2)

5

How many meetings can you have in a day and still do your other work? Take care of your mental space.

6

Who do you meet with, and how often?

- Students enrolled in your classes, advisees
- Research collaborators: how frequently do you need to meet, and for how long?

7

Any other meeting and time obligations? List them on your worksheet.

Activity: Create an ideal day

Schedule in time to work on your most important tasks, using your answers to the journaling questions as a guide.

If time: Craft an ideal week.

Saying “No”

Revisit your opening answer

Revisit your answer at the beginning of the session, and add anything that has come up during this session.

Next, label each item on your list according to how the request will come:

Email

In-person

Either

Saying No

You can apologize, but you don’t have to

Don’t apologize if you are not sorry. It violates principles of clear and honest communication, and it might open a window to push back on your “no.”

You can explain, but you don’t owe an explanation

(unless you are responding to someone who signs your paycheck) An explanation can give some people an opening to push back or to argue how you can say yes.

Be clear

State that you will not be able to do the thing. Don’t say “I don’t think this is going to work for me right now” when you mean “this is never something I want to do.” Just be clear that you cannot do the thing.

Activity: Craft an email that declines

Pick one of the email requests from your list, and craft an email where you decline the request.

Activity: Practice saying no in person

Pick one of the in-person activities. In partners, practice saying no.

In the hallway, a colleague asks: “Can you cover my meeting? It’s just an hour.”

A student asks you for ongoing personal counseling that is outside your role.

A colleague asks you to start a recurring meeting at 7:30 a.m., before your start time.

After a meeting, a committee chair says: “We need one more person, and you’d be perfect.”

At the end of your day, a colleague stops by: “Do you have a quick minute?”

Your own: a request from your opening list.

Questions & Discussion