

Chatterbox #307 – Setting boundaries

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Episode description

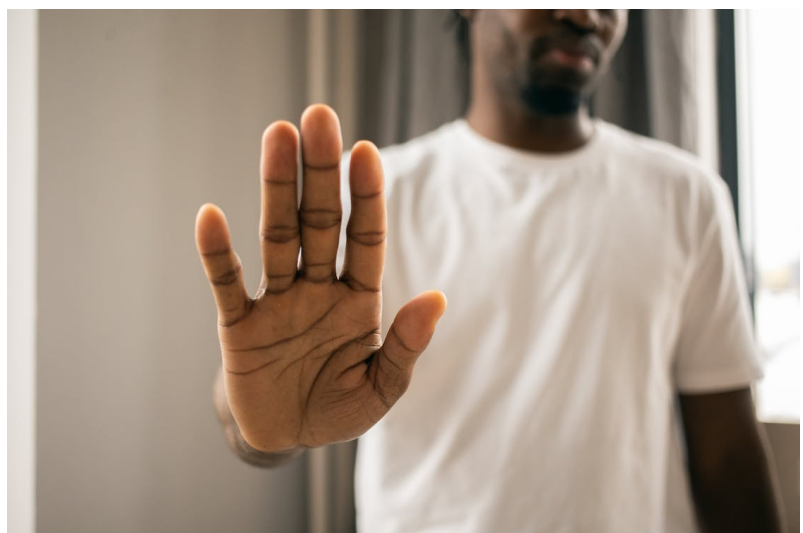
In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Anna talk about the concept of setting boundaries. Setting boundaries means creating limits between ourselves and others. For instance, one example of a boundary you could set is to not respond to work-related calls after dinner time. You can set boundaries for yourself, your friends, family, and even your coworkers and boss. Setting boundaries is an important way to take control in your life and show respect for yourself. If you'd like to hear about how Andrew and Anna set boundaries in their own lives, then this is the episode for you!

Fun fact

The term “work-life balance” became popular in the 1980s. Setting boundaries between your personal life and your professional life is an important strategy for taking care of your mental health. One simple way to set a boundary between working hours and after hours is to turn off e-mail notifications from your work e-mail during that time.

Expressions included in the study guide

- to cross a line/boundary
- to set a precedent
- to run the risk
- to count as
- to have one's [noun] hat on
- to walk all over [someone]





Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, Anna.

Anna: Hi there, everyone. And hello, Andrew. Great to be back here with all of you for another Chatterbox episode. Now, Andrew, what is our topic for today?

Andrew: Well, the topic for today's episode is setting boundaries, setting boundaries. And we'll get into what that means exactly in just a moment, but essentially, in a nutshell, setting boundaries is all about making a set of rules or guidelines for your life so that you can live the life that you wanna live.

Anna: I think this will be a really interesting topic to talk about, actually. I'm very into setting boundaries in different areas of my life. And Andrew, why don't we kick off and start our main discussion topic for today?

Andrew: Sounds good to me. So, Anna, why don't we start by breaking down exactly what we mean by setting boundaries, because I think if people look this word—boundary—up in the dictionary, they'll probably see that it is a line that demarcates between two different places. So, we could talk about the boundary lines between, like Spain and France, for example, right? Or we could talk about a boundary between my property and your property, maybe we'd have a fence as a boundary. This is the dictionary definition but that's not what we're talking about today, we're talking more about personal or individual boundaries. And what does that exactly mean?

Anna: That's a really good point, that boundaries might be something physical, like a physical line. But often when you hear this term, setting boundaries, we're talking about these limits that we give ourselves, maybe it is a career boundary. It's like a **line** that we **won't cross** or a limit, that we **don't want to cross** in a personal space or in a professional space. So, setting boundaries is giving limits to something, maybe that's a relationship, maybe you want to set boundaries in your relationship to make sure that a **line isn't crossed**. And everybody sets different types of boundaries, different types of limits, everybody's comfortable with different things. So, setting boundaries is about giving yourself limits or having limits in different areas of your life. Maybe personal spaces, relationships, career. So, I guess we could talk about setting boundaries, limits and I guess really, those boundaries are based on your values, where they come from—the values that you have. Do you think that's a good description Andrew, would you like to add anything to that, maybe?

Andrew: Yeah, I think that's an excellent description. I think we could use a metaphor or a visualization to help here and you could think of maybe if you are, maybe a dog owner, OK? So, you have like a house with a backyard, and you buy a new dog, and you want to keep your dog in your backyard, so you build a fence, and that fence helps to keep your dog from running away, right? So, that fence acts as the boundary for your dog, keeps your dog inside keeps your dog safe and happy and keeps your family happy too, because your dog doesn't run away. Well, in the same vein, in our personal lives, in our professional lives, in our social lives, we can set up boundaries that protect ourselves, right? We can set rules for our life, we can say, "Hey, I'm not comfortable with this kind of relationship," or "I'm not comfortable with this kind of work environment." So, we set that hard rule for our life, and we say to ourselves, "Well, for me to be happy, I need to live my life within this boundary." And like you said, Anna, everybody has a different level of comfort with doing things, right? Maybe some people would like to set boundaries about how they spend their time. And they would say, "Well, every night, I want to go to bed at 10:00pm because I really value getting a good night's sleep and that is something that is super important for my life." So, they set that kind of time boundary in their life, whereas

other people might be more flexible. And they'll say I don't really need to sleep so much, or my life is flexible, and I can go to sleep at 2am one night and 1:00am the next night and 9:30pm the next night, they have that flexibility so we can set boundaries for so many different areas of our lives. And Anna, you mentioned a few of them there. We talked about time boundaries, we talked about career boundaries, there's boundaries that you could set up about how you want to spend your emotional energy. And maybe that's one that we should break down a little bit as well, Anna, if we're talking about like an emotional boundary or an energy boundary, what kind of boundary would that be?

Anna: So, for me, emotional energy and putting boundaries on that is about who you're spending your time with because we've all got these people, right guys? There's these people that really boost your energy and you love being around them. And there's also people that suck your energy. And this isn't about being an introvert or an extrovert or anything like this, there's people that really suck our energy, maybe they make us feel bad. I'm thinking about one person in particular, for example that I've had in my past, and they kind of zap your emotional energy. So, putting boundaries there and saying, "OK, I'm not going to let this person zap my energy." Maybe that means spending less time with them. Maybe that means spending time with them in a different way. So, I think it's about choosing really carefully who you have around you in your life, and who brings energy to you and who takes it away. And I guess it's really about managing toxic people that might be in your life, toxic people, or toxic things would be what I'm thinking about with emotional energy.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely, I think you hit the nail on the head with that one. Anna, you could also have boundaries that are based around maybe your personal morals, or your ethics or your religious beliefs, right? Depending on the philosophy that you use to guide your life, you might want to set up different boundaries around that. And of course, that's going to vary drastically from person to person to person. But those are some major kinds of boundaries that people set and also their social media boundaries as well, which is kind of a newer form of a boundary. But it's one that I try to do, I try to set some boundaries

around social media. In my life, for example, I have some applications installed on my computer and on my phone that limit how much time I can spend on certain social media sites like Instagram and Reddit, just because they're very addictive, and I am addicted to them, so those help me to set some boundaries. Why don't we talk about some of the boundaries that we have in our lives, Anna, I think maybe jumping into some examples would be a really clear way to illustrate what we're meaning when we talk about setting boundaries.

Anna: One of the main boundaries that I have, and I'm going to start with social media, because that's what we're talking about here. You mentioned, kind of managing the time that you use it. So, one thing for me, that's a boundary that I set on social media is how much I share about my private life, for example. So, there's things that I'm happy to share on social media, I'm generally quite a private person, I only have a business account on social media—I don't have any personal social media accounts. So, on my business professional account, I share a limited amount of personal information that I feel comfortable with. But there is **a line that I won't cross**. For example, I won't share things about where I am, location, that's an obvious one, right? And there's elements about my family and my friends that I feel that are not for me, not that it's not appropriate, for me, it's **crossing a boundary** and I want to keep it professional, I want to keep it focused on the work that I do. So, that for me is setting a boundary between, “This is my professional account, and this is my personal life.” So, that's a really important boundary for me to set. And for me, actually, Andrew, a lot of this thing about setting boundaries is about this personal... private, especially when it's to do with social media. And I think setting boundaries is a lot about relationships. And people, actually, for me, I remember I had one friend, unfortunately, they're not a friend anymore, I wouldn't consider them a friend now—you know when you get that feeling and you just know when **somebody's crossed a boundary**, they've done something, and you just think you've gone too far **you've crossed the line**. And if you accept that behavior, **it sets a precedent**. And it means that they feel comfortable treating you like that again in the future. So, for me, it's really important to nip that sort of thing in the bud and say, “This is not a person that I want in my

life anymore. I'm going to set that boundary for myself and I'm going to move on." I'm not going to cause a fuss. I'm not going to have an argument with them or whatever. But I'm just going to take this decision and say, "I don't think that this person is a good person to have in my life, so I'm not going to have them in my life." Setting boundaries for me is really about relationships, the people that you have around you, what behaviors are you going to accept and what are you not going to accept and nipping the things in the bud that you don't like. By the way guys, nipping something in the bud is a beautiful phrase, I love this one. And it basically means to try and sort out the problem before it gets any worse.

Andrew: Yeah, to solve the problem as soon as you can, as soon as you notice the problem to try your best to take care of it, right? And that's a great example of nipping something in the bud—which is spelt, B-U-D by the way, bud—before it blows up and explodes, right? So, if you do have that kind of interpersonal issue with another person, maybe a friend or an acquaintance and you feel like they are just not respecting you or maybe draining you of your emotional energy or are any of the things that we've been talking about, then you could try and solve that problem by nipping it in the bud, and maybe removing that person from your life before that person causes you a lot of grief. Anna, you were talking about how you try to keep your personal life away from social media. And I'm wondering if you've ever had this happen to you, because it's happened to me before. And I realized that because of this, I needed to create a boundary in my life around it. And that is people just posting anything they like on social media, without asking permission. And I actually had to set this boundary with my wife, believe it or not, because she is much more open to sharing about her life on social media than I am in my life. So, I am maybe not as strict as you about social media. Anna, I because I do have my own personal social media account, but it's restricted only to my friends. So, it's not open. And I really only have a small amount of followers, who are all people I know well, they're my friends, they're my family. And I don't just share details about my private life on the internet. Like you, of course, I have the Culips Instagram, and I have, you know, different things like that. But I try not to share too many personal details. It just makes me feel

uncomfortable to do that on the internet. But my wife when we first met, she was very happy to just post any pictures online. And especially she would not always but I remember one instance, she just posted a photo where I didn't look very good. You know, I was making like a funny face. And she thought it was cute. And I guess it was cute. Maybe I overreacted. But I was like, "Could you take that down? Like, do we have to put that picture online? Like really, you know?" So, I felt like she kind of **crossed a line**. And I had to set that boundary like, "OK, if you want to post a picture on social media, at least just ask me first." That's my rule, right? I'm curious, has that ever happened to you, has somebody posted your picture on social media without asking first?

Anna: Well, here's the thing, I'm a bit of a professional at this, because the way that you can avoid that situation is just not letting people take pictures of you, which is what I do. So essentially, there's no pictures that exist of me that I have not taken. Therefore, **I run no risk of** a rogue picture being uploaded on Instagram. And like you said, everybody has different levels, like some people might find it strange that I don't have personal social media. And it's just a personal choice. It's not kind of I'm not punishing myself or anything, I just prefer to do that. And another example, I thought I'd share in a professional context, because it's also in a professional context, as well. I work with different clients. And Andrew, I know that you work with students where I'm sure you have to set boundaries about things like homework and being on time, and maybe you are listening at home, maybe you're thinking ah, yeah, at work, I have to set some boundaries with my boss, maybe or with my team. Well, one thing for me, and this is a really good example of this is about cancellations. So, I have different clients that I work with, and you have to set a really clear boundary that if you cancel the session before a time before a specific time period, then that session is going **to be counted as** taken. And this is actually really hard. And one thing I did want to say, Andrew, is that it is hard to set boundaries. I'm not saying that it's easy, especially when they are personal relationships, or people that you like. And one thing when you're working with clients is **you've got to have a very business hat on** because even though sometimes you feel bad, because you're like it's a late cancellation, I feel really bad. But I have to make sure that I do this because **otherwise it sets a**

precedent. And I'm going to come back to that phrase, because I used that one before. And **to set a precedent**, it could be a bad precedent or a good one. But normally we use it in a bad context. Again, it comes back to that thing of if I let you do this now, you're gonna do it again in the future and that's not OK. So, you have to set that boundary, make sure it's really clear, if you cancel the session before a specific time, I'm going **to count** the session **as** taken. I'm really sorry but that's the way it works. And you have to be quite cold and neutral about it. But I do find that hard sometimes. Sometimes I feel bad, but that's the name of the game. These are the rules. These are the conditions. And it's very important to do that because otherwise **people will walk all over you**. They really will. Not everyone, but you do have to be careful. You have to protect yourself sometimes, especially in a professional context, also, as well.

Andrew: Yeah, especially when it comes to business, right? Anna, so I know you do a lot of teaching and coaching online. And for example, if I were one of your clients, and we had a session together at 3:00pm, and then at 2:55pm I messaged you and I say "Anna, I'm so sorry. But my boss just called me, and I have to have a different meeting today. I can't work with you. Could we reschedule for a different time?" Well, in that kind of situation, you know, you really have to have that boundary because if you just say OK, yeah, we can reschedule, then you're wasting your time, right? You've set aside that time in your day for that coaching session. And if it gets cancelled at the last moment, then well, that's your planning time gone. That's the time that you've scheduled for that gone, you're losing your income. So, it's really important to have that professional boundary in place. I completely agree. And I think most people would understand that. I mean, it does suck if you're on the other side of it, right? Especially if it's a legitimate excuse, but it's very important to have that kind of strong rule, that strong boundary in place.

Anna: Yeah, and I think another very quick example of this is always saying yes to things at work. Yes, I'll do it. Yes, I'll be there. Yes, I'll get it finished by tomorrow. And without setting those boundaries of saying, "OK, I will do this, but I'm not going to work until 11:00pm on a Friday night, I'm sorry." So, you know, setting boundaries with your boss

and your team, because what you end up being in danger of is being a yes person, always saying yes. And by that you're actually harming yourself, because maybe you're making yourself work more hours, you're putting yourself under more stress. So, setting boundaries is, I think, really important at work and in our personal space. But it's difficult, you have to be really strong, you have to really think about what you want and what your values are. And it's easier said than done, right? It's really easy to talk about setting boundaries. But when you're in that relationship with somebody can be hard, because maybe you feel bad, maybe you want to trust them, you want to think that they won't push the boundaries again. But I think there's a really nice quote here, which is, past behavior is the biggest predictor of future behavior.

Andrew: Well, we were talking earlier about those emotionally draining people, those emotional leeches, if we could call them that, it's not very kind, but I think it's a good expression to describe people like that. And there's people like that everywhere in business as well, right? I'm not saying that clients are bad people. But there are those kinds of people out there that once they know they can cancel a session once, then they'll try and do it anytime that's convenient for them, right? So, it's very important to have those rules in place so that you aren't taken advantage of. One boundary that I have in my life, is that after 10:00pm, I try not to do anything work related anymore. So, what I mean by work related is to do with my university job, but also Culips as well. So, because I have these two things going on all the time, it means that I'm busy. And sometimes I have to do work at night or work in the morning whenever I can, really. But if it hits 10:00pm, it's like that's it, no matter how much I have to do, no matter how stressed I am, it's like computers getting turned off. And I'm going to shut things down for the night. And I really try and follow that strict 10:00pm rule, I'll even put my phone into a mode, there's different options, so that, you know, I'm not getting any work-related messages or emails, and I just try and turn that professional side of my life off, as soon as it hits 10:00pm. That's my hard and fast rule about that.

Anna: I like it, I think time boundaries are really good, it's a very practical way that you can try and manage your time. One small thing that I started doing, and if you are somebody like me, who tends to sit down and just switch on the TV, or "I'm just going to check out Netflix and see what's going on there, before you know it, two hours later, you've watched a season of whatever." I actually started unplugging from Monday to Friday, I don't plug in my Amazon Prime. So, I take out my Amazon fire stick, take it out, I take out the box, and I put it under my bed. And because it takes so much effort to go and get it back and put it in, I now only watch things like that at the weekend because otherwise, it's just a time sucker. And this is a thing like, I don't want to spend my time doing that during the week. But it's just too tempting when it's there. So that's one of my recent boundaries. It sounds like I'm trying to make my life worse, but it's not that at all. But I do think that boundaries are really important. Otherwise, we just do everything that we want all the time. And, you know, we'd be getting nowhere, it'd be a be a mess. So, I think boundaries are really important for yourself to protect yourself from toxic things and behaviors that really are not going to help you all that much.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. We could say that setting boundaries are a form of self-care, right? They're a way to take care of yourself. I mean, I set that 10:00pm boundary, so that I'll get a good night's sleep because I know if I don't get a good sleep, then I'm not going to be able to recharge my battery and I'm not going to have energy to do any work the next day. So, I'm trying to take care of myself by setting that boundary. Same with social media stuff. Maybe I've mentioned this on Culips before I can't quite remember but I think maybe I have, so please forgive me everybody if you've heard this story before, but one boundary that my wife and I have in our relationship is that we have no phones at the dinner table. So, while we're eating dinner together, nobody's using their phone. And that boundary is to help our relationship be strong, right? We can use that time to talk with each other and communicate with each other. Often, that is the only time of the day that we both have to sit down. And, you know, talk about what we did that day, or what we're thinking or how we're feeling, etcetera, etcetera. So, we really need to have that boundary in place to help

our relationship stay strong and to become even stronger. So, I think, although these rules or these boundaries may sound harsh, they're really a way for us to take care of ourselves.

Anna: I love that. And I think that's a really nice one to finish on that it's not because as you said, setting boundaries, it can come across as negative and it's to avoid toxic things. But it's also about, you know, making sure that you can make the most of the good things. And I love that thing about being present in the conversation and being there. I wish more people did that. And I think that's going to be a challenge for us in the future is connecting when we are with people and our friends and our family and our loved ones. So, love that, great boundary.

Andrew: Well, everyone, that brings us to the end of this episode. Thanks for listening, and congratulations on completing some English practice with us today. But now it's your turn to contribute to the conversation. And you can do that by leaving a comment on our website. Please let us know about your experiences with setting boundaries. Do you do it? Has it worked out for you? What kind of boundaries do you have in your life? We're dying to know the answers to all of these questions. So, let's keep the conversation going in the comments, which you can find on our website, Culips.com. We'll be back soon with another new episode, and we'll talk to you all then. Goodbye.

Anna: Bye, bye. See you soon!

Andrew: And that brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye!

Detailed Explanations

To cross a line/boundary Idiom

In the very beginning of the episode, Anna and Andrew explain what they mean by “setting boundaries.” They say that this means you’re creating a line in your personal or professional life that you will not allow yourself or others **to cross**.

To cross a line or a **boundary** means moving from one side of a line to the other side. While this can be used literally (you might see it in public works signs, like “Do not cross the white line”) we usually use it figuratively. **To cross a line** means to go beyond an acceptable limit of behaviour. The limit can be a personal boundary someone has set for themselves or the limit can be a social norm.

For example, Andrew tells a story from when he first met his wife. She posted a funny picture of him on social media which made him feel a bit uncomfortable and so he asked her to remove that image and not to post any other photos of him online without his permission. He felt that posting a photo without permission **crossed a line**.

An example of crossing a line which is an established social norm would be yelling or swearing at your boss. Many workplaces encourage employees to share their feedback, complaints, and opinions, but raising your voice and saying offensive things **crosses a line**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to cross a line/boundary**:

Teresa: I heard you went to see some live stand-up comedy last night.

David: Yeah, I went with some friends.

Teresa: How was it?

David: It was all right. Some of the jokes were pretty funny, but I felt like others were a little bit offensive and **crossed a line**.

Harry: I’m sorry for my behaviour earlier. I shouldn’t have shouted at you.

Rebecca: You’re right, you shouldn’t have. I think we should be able to discuss difficult subjects like adults without raising our voices. That really **crosses a boundary**. I appreciate your apology, though.

To set a precedent

Idiom

Anna explains that if you set a boundary and someone tries to cross that boundary, it's important to address the problem immediately. For example, she brings up a personal example of setting a deadline for when clients can cancel a session with her and get their money back. If a client tries to cancel too close to the time of their session, she must decline and be firm about her rule. Otherwise, **it sets a precedent**, and that client will take advantage of Anna and cancel sessions whenever it is convenient to them.

To set a precedent means to take an action that will be an example for future similar situations. A common example of **setting a precedent** that many American history students are familiar with is the story of George Washington. After two terms of being the first president of the United States, he decided not to run for re-election for a third term. Washington didn't want the presidency to be seen as a lifelong role. Therefore, he tried to **set a precedent** that two terms are an appropriate amount of time for someone to serve as president.

That is an example of a good precedent, but as Anna mentions, we often use the expression to talk about bad precedents. For example, if your boss asks you to work during your vacation, saying yes will **set a precedent** that you are always available during your vacations. Your boss will be more likely to ask you again and again.

Here are a couple more examples with **to set a precedent**:

George: Did you hear about Company A's new parental leave policy?

Jenn: I did! It's four months off with full pay for new parents, right?

George: That's exactly right. It's a really generous policy. Since Company A is so influential, I hope this **sets a precedent** in the industry. Our workplace's parental leave policy could use some changes.

Richard: Ugh, my boss won't stop texting me about the presentation we're giving tomorrow.

Lisa: Richard, you need to tell her that you'll talk to her about it tomorrow. It's 9:30pm. You're **setting a terrible precedent** that you're available to talk about work at any time of day!

Richard: You're right, but it is so hard to set firm boundaries with her.

To run the risk

Idiom

When Andrew and Anna are talking about personal information and photos being uploaded to social media, Anna explains that she has set up a strong boundary about photos—she doesn't let other people take photos of her. Therefore, Anna says, **she runs no risk of** unapproved photos of her being posted online.

To run the risk means to do something that might end in a negative outcome. If a verb follows this idiom, we use it in the gerund form (ing). For example, "**You're running the risk of** failing your final exams by slacking off on your schoolwork." Another example might be, "An athlete **runs the risk of injuring** himself if he begins running without properly stretching first."

Anna negates this idiom in an unusual way—instead of saying "**I don't run any risk of,**" she says, "**I run no risk of.**" While it's more common to use the former, the latter sounds dramatic and is an acceptable way of negating this idiom. For instance, you can say, "It is important to wear masks, so **we run no risk of** infecting others," or, "It's important to wear masks so **we don't run any risk of** infecting others."

Here are a couple more examples with **to run the risk**:

Mary: Why are you so late to work?

Steve: I overslept...

Mary: You overslept again? That's the third time this month. You've got to be careful, Steve. You're **running the risk of** getting in big trouble with the boss.

Steve: I know, I know...

Brett: Wow, your car is covered in salt. When's the last time you got it washed?

Fiona: Uhh, I don't think I've washed it since I bought it.

Brett: What?! Washing your car isn't just about vanity. If you don't wash the undercarriage in the winter, the salt from the roads will cause lots of rust. **You're running the risk of** major damage to your car.

Fiona: I didn't know that! How often should I be getting it washed in the winter?

Brett: I'd say once every two weeks. It's annoying, but it's worth it.

To count as

Verb

In her story about setting cancellation time limits with clients, Anna mentions that it can be very hard to be strict about her boundaries. However, since she doesn't want to set a bad precedent, she has to be consistent and tell clients who cancel right before their session that the session **will be counted as taken** and she can't refund them.

To count as means to treat or consider something as having a certain status. For example, someone might say, "Only people 18 and older **count as** adults in this country." This means that they are considered adults. Another example could be the overtime policy at different companies. Working more than eight hours per day **counts as** overtime at Company A, while working more than nine hours per day **is counted as** overtime at Company B.

This is a great verb for differentiating between fact and perception. In Anna's example, a client who cancels right before a session will still have that session considered a completed session, even though they have not literally completed that session with her. Using **to count as** clears this up—if Anna says, "I cannot refund you since the session **has been counted as taken**," her rule becomes clearer.

Here are a couple more examples with **to count as**:

Sarah: That music history was really interesting. I'm so glad we went.

Tim: Me too! I didn't know that rhythm and blues is considered the main influence on modern rock and roll.

Sarah: That was new information for me, too. I loved seeing the exhibit about Freddie Mercury. I **count him as** one of the greatest singers of all time.

Vince: It seems that there was a problem with the acidity levels during the lab experiment. The machine started malfunctioning on Tuesday afternoon.

Lois: Again? We need to get our equipment fixed. So, how does that effect the data?

Vince: Well, I think we need to discard all of the data we've collected since Tuesday, but the data from Saturday to Monday **should count as** valid.

Lois: Sounds good to me.

Vince: I'll call the equipment repair specialist this afternoon.



To have one's [noun] hat on

Idiom

A lot of the conversations in this episode are about how difficult it can feel to maintain the boundaries you have set. Anna tells Andrew that even when it doesn't feel nice for her to maintain boundaries with clients, she just has **to have her business hat on** and be strict about her rules.

People have many different roles in their lives—one woman could be a mother, daughter, businesswoman, friend, rival, and wife. Sometimes, you need to focus on being just one of those roles. **To have** or **to put one's [noun] hat on** is an idiom that means to temporarily adopt one particular role or mindset. In Anna's case, she needs to not be her client's friend, but rather a businesswoman providing a service. Acting like the client's friend will not help her maintain boundaries, but **putting on her business hat** will.

A project manager may suggest to her team, "Okay, everyone. Let's **put on our problem-solving hats** and brainstorm some innovative solutions for this issue." After a father gets home from his teaching job and greets his kids, he has to take off his teacher hat and **put on his parent hat**.

Related to this idiom is the popular business slang expression, "I'm wearing too many hats." This means you have too many roles and responsibilities of which you're feeling overwhelmed by.

Here are a couple more examples with **to have one's [noun] hat on**:

Penny: What time is it?

Benjamin: 8:55.

Penny: Uh-oh, my Zoom meeting is starting in just a few minutes. I've got to hurry up and finish eating breakfast. It's time **to put my business hat on**.

Olivia: Can you pause the show? I just got a bunch of texts from Mark.

Eli: Sure.

Olivia: It seems like our daughters got into a huge fight and they won't speak to each other or Mark about. I think I have to go **put my parent hat on** and sort it out. Thanks for having me over today and sorry for leaving so suddenly!

Eli: Of course! It's no problem. Good luck with the girls.



To walk all over [someone]

Idiom

One of the main points from the conversation between Anna and Andrew this episode is how important boundaries are. You have to maintain your boundaries because if you don't, you **run the risk of people walking all over you**.

To walk all over [someone] doesn't literally mean to step on a person, but that's how it can feel. **To walk all over [someone]** means to take advantage of someone and treat them badly, without respect or care. People who don't stand up for themselves tend to be **walked all over** by others.

For instance, an employee who constantly agrees to work on the weekend and is asked to do errands unrelated to work might feel like he's **getting walked all over by** his boss. Similarly, healthy relationships are all about give and take—if one partner is always **getting walked all over** by the other, the relationship won't last very long.

Another interesting expression related to this idea is “to be a doormat.” Just like the idea of being stepped on in the phrase “**to be walked all over**,” someone who is a doormat doesn't advocate for themselves and lets others take advantage of them.

Here are a couple more examples with **to walk all over someone**:

Donna: You were out on vacation, so I don't know if you've heard, but Kira quit on Friday.

Rudy: What? Really?

Donna: Yeah, she announced it in front of everyone. She publicly explained that she was leaving because she had been feeling used and mistreated by management.

Rudy: That's incredible. Her boss was always **walking all over her**, so I'm glad she finally stood up for herself and made a change.

Brittany: I need some advice. I feel like my sister tends **to walk all over me** and I don't know how to talk to her about it.

Eric: I've noticed that, too. She's always asking for favors and telling you what to do.

Brittany: Right. She also never listens to me when I need to vent about my own problems. Our relationship feels very one-sided.

Eric: I think you should be honest with her about how you feel.

Quiz

1. Your friend tells you, “I feel that your joke crossed a line.” What does he mean?

- a) He thought the joke was unintentionally funny
- b) He thought the joke was unoriginal
- c) He thought the joke was super hilarious
- d) He thought the joke was offensive and hurtful

2. Your boss says, “This plan runs no risk of failure.” What does she mean?

- a) The plan will surely succeed
- b) The plan is designed to fail
- c) The plan might fail
- d) The plan will hopefully not fail

3. What’s a synonym of “to walk all over someone”?

- a) To massage someone
- b) To take advantage of someone
- c) To treat someone with respect
- d) To kick someone

4. Which of the following is NOT a good synonym for “precedent”?

- a) Guideline
- b) Example
- c) Exception
- d) Model

5. What does the idiom “to put one’s business hat on” mean?

- a) To apply for a job
- b) To put on a fashionable hat
- c) To behave professionally
- d) To behave rudely



Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with Anna and Andrew that it's important to set boundaries? Why or why not? Do you set any boundaries in your life?
2. Have you ever felt walked all over by someone? If not, have you ever seen someone get walked all over by someone else? Explain.
3. What "hats" do you wear in your life? Which of these roles do you identify with the most? Do you ever feel like you're taking one hat off and putting on another?
4. Has anyone ever crossed a line with you? What did they do? How did you address the problem?
5. Who is the person in your life whom you respect the most? Why do you respect them?

Quiz Answers

1.d 2.a 3.b 4.c 5.c

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