Tip of the Quarter April 2023 – Setting Healthy Workplace Boundaries Tactfully

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"True strength is found in standing firm yet bending gently." -*Author unknown*

Studies show that job stress is the primary source of anxiety for American adults and has escalated over the past few decades. One of the reasons is that technology allows us to lead 24/7 work lives virtually with no boundaries.

Identify Priorities:
List out your top priorities in addition to work to see how you should allocate your time and energy. Think in the short term to keep from feeling overwhelmed - what will help you get through your workload by the end of the week? Then prioritize your tasks that will help make this a success. Aim not to overextend yourself.

Learn to Say "No":
Once your priorities are established, saying "no" when offered extra work is okay. But first, consider if the extra work will prevent you from achieving your goals; politely turn it down if it does. Saying "no" is a powerful skill that helps you enforce your boundaries at work and keep your goals a priority.

Take Time Off:
Taking time off helps set boundaries at work by giving yourself a break from your responsibilities. Aim to get ahead of your schedule and plan out a vacation or mental health days in advance.

Look for Examples of Professional Boundaries:
Setting boundaries at work takes work. So have a conversation with your manager, supervisor, coworker, or mentor that you trust and ask them how they maintain workplace boundaries. Taking this approach creates a dialogue for you to communicate your boundaries with your colleagues and can inspire you to create workplace boundaries that align with others' boundaries.

Silence Notifications:
Silence work-related notifications at the end of the day so that emails and messages do not interrupt your dinner or family time.

Create Built-In Breaks:
Creating a system that helps you stick to your boundaries is helpful. For example, build your lunch break into a digital calendar every day of the week. Doing so will remind you to take your meal break at an appropriate time and keep you from getting carried away with work.

Triage Your Tasks:
Even if you have a system built in to take breaks, on your busier days, more time is possibly needed to combat the heavy workload most of us have. Triage your tasks based on priority to adhere to your schedule and boundaries. Tasks that are urgent and important should be done now, while other tasks that do not fall in this category can be delegated, saved for later, or eliminated.

References
Sparks, D. (2019). *Mayo Mindfulness: Tips to reclaim some control in your life-work balance*. https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/mayo-mindfulness-tips-to-reclaim-some-control-in-your-life-work-balance/