Episode 3

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**A'Milliana:** Hello everyone. Welcome back to the Be Well Mu podcast. This is your host A'Milliana McNeil with my co-host Yessenia. And here we are gonna be talking about forming healthy boundaries today. Cuz not only are we. Very much close to Thanksgiving and just generally the holiday season.

But you know, we don't want you all to go back home and face those uncomfortable conversations at the dinner table when people usually are, crossing said boundaries with a person in order to know about their life. So, today we are going to really hone in on forming boundaries and. Knowing what to properly do when somebody has crossed a boundary or when you feel like you're teetering somebody else's boundary

right? So to begin, what are boundaries? What are the types of boundaries? So [00:01:00] boundaries are limits of what a person will accept when it comes to another person's words or actions. It's to find more of a spectrum from rigid to completely, almost nonexistent. There are many forms of boundaries like physical, that deals with personal space and privacy, emotional sharing feelings, sexual being comfortable in a sexual manner, intellectual and finance.

As well. So there are many forms of boundaries. And then we're just gonna kick things off. What's the best approach in forming a healthy boundary?

**Yessenia:** Great. Well, I think one of the most important parts about boundaries is being mindful of where those lines are for you. And this is, I think, the hardest part because we most often don't realize what those lines are until someone's crossed them.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah.

**Yessenia:** . Of course there are things that are rather clear to us, like, Oh, you know, like I feel most comfortable if someone stands. Away from me at a socially acceptable [00:02:00] distance versus like when they're a little too close that, that might be a little more clear. But when we're talking about like the way someone talks to you and things like that, you might not realize like that doesn't feel okay until it's not feeling okay.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah.

**Yessenia:** And then that's where we face. Dilemma of like what to do next. Right. I think we've all familiar with that feeling in our gut that something feels off, like something feels uncomfortable. But most of the times we ignore it.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah

**Yessenia:** . Right. You don't say that something someone says upset you because you're like, Maybe I'm overreacting. You kind of talk yourself outta it, right? That's where it gets challenging. Yeah. Being able to like say something when a line's being crossed because you should respect those lines for yourself.

**A'Milliana:** I definitely feel that, like when it comes to forming boundaries, in my personal experience, it was like a trial and error period for me. Like, okay, the only way I'm gonna know if I do have a [00:03:00] boundary in this aspect of my life is if I push and I, I feel like that's not the healthiest way to do it. So I mean, my. I actually say go to student counseling, . They're here for a reason, and I know that for me, talking to somebody was the best healthy way to form the boundaries I do have for myself now. . , and it's not gonna happen overnight. It's definitely not gonna happen overnight. It is a long process, and I think we both agree that there are cultures that have like different ways of sharing information. Oh, they're more open to sharing information or they're not open to share information.

So I think like the best approach in my opinion would definitely be go to student counseling and talking to somebody about it because. We do do that thing where we convince ourselves that, Oh, we're overreacting. Oh, it's really not that big of a deal. , oh, it's nothing. But obviously we internalize those type of feelings and we get to a point where it's more destructive [00:04:00] rather than helpful so yeah, I definitely believe that student counseling is the best approach.

Yeah. In my opinion,

**Yessenia:** figuring out boundaries is complicated. , you bring up the culture piece. I think that. a lot of the times when this idea of boundaries get thrown around it feels very much a very western kind of thing.

. So I'm Latina. That's my culture. Right. And idea of boundaries is essentially non-existent, and so cultures. Right. When you think about families, right, when you're thinking about holidays coming up, it can almost feel like , that's the the most important thing. You have to like, honor your parents.

All these ideas to tell is like there are in our lives there. . . Right? Or the priority is not you. . . And so when I bring up this concept of boundaries with people who are also Latino or coming from that similar cultural perspective, it almost feels like very foreign. And like, what do you mean?

Like I have, like, I'm coming from this idea of like, other people are my priority. And so shifting. [00:05:00] To me makes no sense. And so what I say to that is that boundaries don't necessarily, are not necessarily one size fits all.. or one singular way of approaching it. Sometimes it's about navigating.

Creating those lines in a way that makes sense for what are your priorities, right? So like I can still value my family and value like honoring my parents, but also bring some consideration more to me as well. Yeah. So redrawing those lines in a way that makes sense. So for instance, A lot of people who come from immigrant backgrounds, they have to do like a lot of translating for their parents or a lot of navigating systems because their parents aren't familiar with them.

And so that's obviously gonna be a priority cause you wanna help your parents, but you might have to kind of like pick and choose when to extend yourself in that way. So it's not saying, Or nothing, like I'm not gonna help my parents cuz I need to like prioritize me. Right? Yeah. It's more of like, okay, how can I also consider myself in this [00:06:00] situation?

Yeah. So that maybe sometimes I do it, but not all the times so that I'm not like expending myself too much.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah. I think

this is where like the importance of self care and like just mentally being aware of yourself comes into play here. I know for me, When I was going through my own type of process with my family, informing those boundaries, and I'm still going through the process.

I am not finished far from finish. And I feel like a lot of people aren't necessarily finished with boundaries. . Like in life I think they continuously,

It's a life thing.

Yeah. But for me, I, the way my environment, being from the black community you set up, it was like boundaries was like somewhat of a conundrum. . like, You share all your business to me, but you don't share all of your business to me. Like I don't want to know about your personal life, like love, or like I wanna know about school, I wanna know about your living arrangements. I wanna know if like other things, but it's like certain [00:07:00] subjects had boundaries automatically. , but then like a bunch of other subjects are free for all you're supposed. Share this information with your family. Like, I feel like it was more of like an obligation rather than a choice. To express what was going on in my life. What would, how I was feeling about something if I was uncomfortable about a certain situation I was in.

 Felt like it was, it wasn't as respected as what it is now. . Yeah. But I was just wondering, so when a person. Has a boundary. Right? And there's another person within the situation and they know that there are boundaries placed in the area of the conversation, but they don't know when to. Like back out or like, Okay, I can still continue with this conversation without disrespecting this person's boundaries. Is there like a way to [00:08:00] know when that actually, when somebody should back out or when somebody should continue on with a conversation, even though it's in the spectrum of where a person's boundaries are in?

 So like I'm, I don't know how to really say this in a way. , it'll generally be the message will generally be communicated, but I know for me in personal experience when dealing with somebody that I know that had boundaries about a certain subject and we were in that realm. In the conversation.

I always check in. Yeah. Like, okay. Right, Continue with the conversation. Is this okay? All right. Continue with the conversation. So for me, I think the best way to recognizing somebody is getting uncomfortable with the boundary is always checking in and knowing that they have those boundaries in those certain subjects.

But, How can a person healthy convey that, Yes, I have a [00:09:00] boundary, and you are crossing it, or you are close to crossing it,

**Yessenia:** Right yeah. I mean, I think both sides of what you're bringing up are so important, right? Like us as individuals, we will and we can cross other people's boundaries, right? Yeah.

Like I was saying, it is A thing that we're constantly figuring out and reworking. So it's gonna happen. So it does. Our hope is that that other person's gonna voice that to us so we can be aware. Cuz we can't read minds, we won't know. Obviously there are things to look out for, like a person's body language.

So if they're seeming uncomfortable and you're seeing that, taking that as a signal of like, okay, maybe I need to check in if this is an okay conversation or. Kind of like what you're saying on the other end, if you are the one starting to notice yourself feeling uncomfortable, being able to voice that to the person, Right?

Yeah. Cause at the end of the day, we have to be our own advocates. No one else is necessarily gonna guarantee that they will advocate for us. Mm-hmm. . So if I'm feeling uncomfortable, I'm tensing up. But you're not reading that, which, you know, sometimes just [00:10:00] aren't, People are not good at reading body language.

Yeah. . Not super mindful of it, then it's on me to kind of like say, Hey, this is making me uncomfortable. Mm-hmm. , or, Hey, can we change the top, like the conversation to something else? Or like, me, me diverting the conversation to something else? Yeah. It means like quietly moving us away. But I think the best thing is to be direct and clear, right?

So if I'm like talking to you and I'm like, Hey, I don't wanna talk. Relationships right now. Like, can we talk about something else? Mm-hmm. . All right. This is making me uncomfortable. Like let's, let's let's change the subject, right? Yeah. I think most of the times what will happen is the person will hear that and be like, Okay.

 , let's divert. Yeah. Now, The hard part, is when you draw that line and the other person does not respect it. I think that's where there's a lot of challenges now. I think what can stop people from even like drawing those lines is that fear of like, Oh, the person's not gonna respect it. But that shouldn't stop us. Like, first of all, you have to kind of draw the line and see if that [00:11:00] person can meet that need. . Right. And respect it. Most of the times they will. Of course there are people in our lives who do not meet those needs. and. Position to make a decision about what happens next.

Yeah. Ultimately, you need to prioritize your own wellbeing and your own safety. And so sometimes we have to kind of leave that situation and walk away. Yeah. Which means the kind of the most stressing examples, like I have to like, Cross this person outta my life cuz they're just not respecting me.

 But sometimes it's about like being more firm about our boundaries and saying like, Hey, if you don't like respect this line, then I'm gonna have to change our relationship. Right. Yeah. Or I may not have to be, I can't be around you as much cuz you keep bringing this up even though I've told you not to.

**A'Milliana:** Yes.

Right. Those words seem so simple, but like it holds so much weight.. to that because I know like, generally people aren't like combative. They don't want to like directly be like, This is what it is and this is this and this is that and I don't appreciate this and I don't like, That's just generally not what people. [00:12:00] There are, and yeah, especially college students, . I really want to like touch on wellbeing and self care and prioritizing yourself because I feel that the boundaries topic is much more about the individual than the environment that they would be in.. And you know, . It's kind of weird in a sense, terms to college students because we are like in this limbo, like we're approaching adulthood, but we're not there yet. , we still have our parents that we

have the answers to still, but we are still becoming an adult, so, How can we like maneuver through that point in our lives in terms of boundaries, because we still do have to answer to our parents and we have that blind obligation to sharing what's going on in our life, even if it's uncomfortable with us.

. , but still have. The wherewithal and you know, the time [00:13:00] and the confidence to really prioritize yourself and prioritize your boundaries, and that's when the spectrum of boundaries come into play. If it's more rigid, then almost nonexistent, right? It's just the person needs to take away that time in order.

Deal with those and figure out what their boundaries are. But what is your advice for college students who are in that limbo spot? And they're trying to, be healthy, , and form these boundaries with their family and friends. But still somehow have to obligate towards those questions.

So, yeah, what is your best advice to that?

**Yessenia:** I think those complexities that you're naming about being like a young adult, right? Mm-hmm. , trying to navigate, figuring yourself out, figuring out all these dynamics you hold.

Yeah. And there are. Unequal feelings of power here. And in some way we'll extend into your later adult , [00:14:00] unfortunately. Because you know, that relationship, that dynamic with your parents is always gonna be there. Right? Like there's always gonna be like, almost like a, I have like feeling like a child

Yes. Right. Like that, that just continues. And it can extend to like, In the future with your boss, right? And feeling like you have an unequal power difference there. But at the, in essence, what's most important is you really learning to understand what feels right for you and what doesn't feel right for you.

Right? Like learning to give that little voice inside of you space and respect. . Like I was saying earlier, that drawing those lines is never like a clear, necessarily gonna be like one way kind approach, Right? It's recognizing what feels right to you and then figuring out what's the best approach to making sure that that little voice inside of you gets a little space, right?

Yeah. So for instance, thinking back to my college time, , , my mom had this [00:15:00] expectation that I should check in with her every day. , right? And so it was a phone call. And if you know Latina moms, they wanna be on the phone,, and like you're talking about midterm right now, right? Like that.

There is no room to be on the phone at all.

Right. So, I had to learn how to navigate those waters and like, okay, this is asking too much of me and I cannot extend right now. So how can I redraw these lines in a way that makes sense for me and for my mom? Right? Yeah. Cause that's obviously still feels important to me. Mm-hmm. . So what I ended up having to do is sometimes I. Was just not gonna pick up the phone I would give her a heads up, like, Hey, I'm in exams. I might not pick up the phone. So she might still call me, but I'm already letting her know I may not answer. Right. And that wasn't always easy to do and I still felt that. Lovely guilt like I wanna call her back.

But also like I have a lot of stuff going on right now, so I can't necessarily do that. So it's navigating all of that complicated feelings that can come about it, but ultimately I [00:16:00] have to kind of like anchor it in, like what do I need right now and what needs to be the priority? And how can I make sure that this relationship is still working?

 Because I didn't wanna just be like, I'm not gonna like, I'm just not gonna pick up. I'm not gonna tell you. I'm not gonna pick up. I have to like just do me. Yeah. That wouldn't feel natural or right to me. So it's like finding ways to draw those lines that make sense. To protect yourself, but also to protect the relationships that feel

important to you.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah. Speaking about relationships, Thanksgiving is coming up , and I know there's gonna be conversations with those nosy family members about your life, what's going on? Where are like, some ways, if there's like a big group setting, like family what are some ways to. discreetly and respectfully form that line early on so people wouldn't, you know Yeah.

Cross that line. Yeah. So what are, what are some ways in a public setting right, that that would, you know,

**Yessenia:** yeah. I think it's [00:17:00] complicated, right? Like , I think you have to take in consideration what are the social spaces you'll be in. How you can maybe navigate those conversations with the people that will be there.

Right. So sometimes, like you may have a good opportunity to have this really, the conversation with the, your family ahead of time. Like be like, Hey, like that was really tough for me. Please don't ask me about school . Right. And then they will be like, Okay, we will really, we'll try not to bring it up.

 Or we'll try to divert the conversation when uncle so and so brings it up. Right. So that's another piece of. Seek your allies in that space. , if it's a cousin, if it's your sister, if it's another parent, you know, find people that will also kind of be mindful of like, Okay, there's a lot of family here.

We know that you don't like talking about this, right? And so we'll try to divert the conversation away. We'll help you, we'll be your support system. Yeah. So those are some ways that you can kind of try to establish. Safe [00:18:00] space around this. Now, if it does come up and you are not feeling comfortable, I think if you don't feel comfortable voicing that, like, hey, like can we talk about something else?

Which, you know, granted sometimes these dynamics are not safe enough for us to do that then finding a. Having like a plan of what you will do if that happens, right? Whether that means excuse yourself and leave the conversation for a few minutes and then come back. Whether that means like, hey, like I'm gonna busy myself, pretend like text a friend or something like that.

 You know, finding, like having a plan, a game plan, essentially. Like if this does come up and I'm feeling uncomfortable, what can happen? . Right. And I'm not saying like this is simple. I'm not saying that it mm-hmm. , it's not gonna be uncomfortable and it's actually happening, but it can feel a little easier going into it if you have a sense of like, Okay, I know these people will, I have these people there that will support me.

Either they're physically there or they're, Yeah. Distantly there, so I know they can reach out to them. Yeah. To help you navigate those waters. Because families are complex. Yes. And we have people in our family that we know and we [00:19:00] trust and we know that they'll have her back. And then we have people in our family that are more like freak for all.

Like, you kind of flip a coin, you don't know what to expect. Right. So it's, it's kind of having that plan going into it that might help. Yeah,

**A'Milliana:** I definitely agree with planning before going. I know for me, I always had an emergency game plan just in case I was in a setting that, you know, I couldn't like just blissfully go away and just reappear. But I know for me, like my best tactic, I always had one AirPod in my ear at the dinner table.

 , I'll play the, my favorite. Just in case, Oh, I know this conversation might be going into, might be going left, it might make me feel uncomfortable. I'm gonna focus on something else. Mm-hmm. , or I'm gonna play Subway surfers,

And just like try to tune them out because not only do I don't wanna disrupt them and be disrespectful, anything like that, but I need to also prioritize my mental wellbeing and make sure I'm okay. [00:20:00] I'm going to do the things that I know, you know, makes me happy. Yeah. Be it Subway, surfers, pe, listening to my favorite song and just having that one AirPod in just to focus on that sound because it can just be a slight change of like, Okay, I'm just gonna focus on this rather than this.

Yeah. And you'll feel more comfortable in that sense. So that was my, that's the best method I've had, .

**Yessenia:** I love that. I think you're actually, you're tapping into another really helpful strategy, which is grounding. Or finding these ways to kind of stay. Present. Mm-hmm. But more focused on one particular thing.

Yeah. Right. Like, so I think what you just said is so important. Sometimes you cannot safely remove yourself from and I say safely, but there is a wide range of safety. just my own,

**A'Milliana:** not physical danger.

**Yessenia:** It can be that, it can be like my own emotional type of safety. Right. Like sometimes it's gonna be more of a thing for me to physically get out and walk away, and that's gonna create more chaos. So it might feel easier or better to, [00:21:00] in that moment just. But also like emotionally, it doesn't feel like a safe space. So then using something like to focus yourself or try to like tune out the, the conversation that's making you uncomfortable could be helpful like whether that's music, whether that's like fidgeting with like jewelry. You know, focusing on your food. You know, whatever you can find that works for you to help you kind of create a little bit of sense of like blanketing from everything else happening.

**A'Milliana:** I definitely agree and it definitely works.

 It works. Once I found out like, okay, well, I don't know, I think it was like a conversation with a friend. That was actually going through, She was going back to Minnesota , I think, and she has a really big family. 10 siblings, Like there's no type of privacy whatsoever.

So what she told me was either play video game rearrange your food, , listen to music or if there's kids around, interact more with the [00:22:00] kids rather than the actual adults. So I was like, Okay, well that, that seems like that's like a more healthy route to go. Like you're still engaged, you're not disrespecting nobody, but at the same time you're prioritizing yourself.

Yeah, I think those are the, like one of the best approaches when it comes to how to go into the holiday season with those nagging family members that wanna know everything. But yeah, I think that about covers it. Thank you so much again for always helping me and always being here for me and always being my co-host and always giving such valuable information.

Again, you can see the full transcript on Marymount . Edu. And you can hear us on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. I hope you all have a lovely Thanksgiving and an overall lovely holiday season. Bye.