

In Focus webinar:
**Promoting healthy
boundaries to
support staff
wellbeing**

Be You In Focus webinar handout

**Be You In Focus webinar: Promoting healthy boundaries to promote staff wellbeing
June 2023**

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Summary of key concepts and messages

- There are different types of boundaries, for example, emotional, physical, and resource boundaries. Boundaries can be difficult to navigate as we all have different values and beliefs, perspectives, and ways of being.
- Boundaries help people “set realistic limits on participation in a relationship or activity” (American Psychological Society).
- Our boundaries can involve understanding where our needs start and where another person’s, begin. This can help us set realistic expectations on how we engage and participate in a relationship or activity.
- Boundaries can be influenced by a range of factors including our family, culture, and past experiences and they can be flexible.
- Boundaries are the ultimate self-care, and our wellbeing is a precious resource.
- Boundaries are a process and need practicing.
- Healthy boundaries take time and practice to implement and maintain, show yourself compassion and patience when first starting this practice.
- It is important for leaders to model healthy boundaries.
- It can feel uncomfortable to create new boundaries for ourselves. This discomfort doesn't make the new boundary wrong.
- Practicing saying ‘no’ in a way that is comfortable for you, can give you time back in your day and week for other priorities, for example having some additional time for activities that give you joy and recharge your battery.

Sharing of participant ideas and reflections (via the chat box or feedback survey)

- When you are saying “yes” to someone, make sure you are not saying “no” to yourself.
- Healthy boundaries can assist in our ability to teach more effectively.
- Being ok with not getting things done at the bottom of the 'to do' list sometimes.
- Starting a staffroom conversation around how we 'celebrate' self-care and a positive culture around it.
- Need for setting boundaries and to give a gentle 'no' by saying “I will get back to you”.
- Saying no is okay and often the reason behind saying yes, is that as educators, we always want to help others, however often at a cost to ourselves. Self-compassion is integral.
- Working through what is important to me as part of my boundaries and learning how to say a gentle no.
- Being aware of over committing. Use re-directional boundary setting language such as: however, let me consider, I'll get back to you, no, but appreciate you thinking of me, perhaps X?
- Remember the wellbeing strategies I give to students also apply to me.
- Making sure I take time to self-care, by doing things that I like and spending time with people that give me energy (source: *Mr. Hollands Otus: Life is what happens to you, while you are busy making other plans. Be intentional about your life*).

Links to resources

Please find below a selection of resources shared during the webinar or used in preparation for the webinar.

Be You Professional Learning

[Be You Professional learning](#) provides a flexible whole learning community approach.

Notice, Enquire, Provide (Early Support Domain)

During this In Focus webinar we referred to **Notice**, **Inquire** and **Provide** modules within the Early Support domain. These modules provide information and guidance on recognising behaviors which might indicate early signs of mental illness, how to talk to children and young people, and you colleagues about these issues, and how to provide appropriate and timely support.

Explore [Early Support - Be You](#)

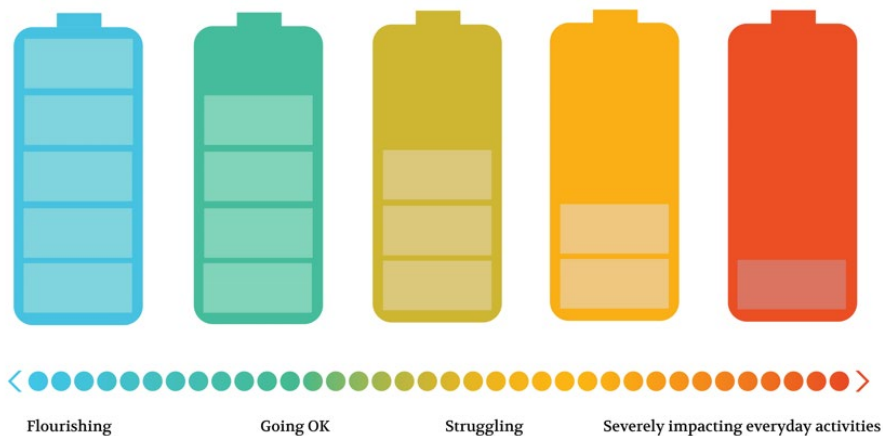
Be You Tools and information

Be You has a number of resources to support [Educator Wellbeing](#), including the Educator Wellbeing Plan and the Beyond Self-Care: An Educator Wellbeing Guide.

Explore all educator wellbeing resources [here](#).

The [Be You Mental Health Continuum](#) is a guide to increase your understanding of mental health, assist in determining your level of concern and inform your actions.

Explore more: <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/mental-health-continuum>



Fact Sheets

Be You Fact Sheets help you explore and gain knowledge on mental health and wellbeing topics, and to share information and ideas with your learning community.

Specific Be You Fact Sheets discussed included:

- [Communication Skills for Educators](#)
- [Before Recommending Additional Support](#)
- [Recommending Additional Support](#)
- [Educator Wellbeing Fact sheets](#)

Other References

- [Boundaries and School Staff Wellbeing \(linkedin.com\)](#) by Melinda Phillips (<https://www.compassionateschools.com.au>)
- Circle of influence <https://resources.franklincovey.com/blog/focus-on-your-circle-of-influence>
- headspace [NIP it in the bud resources](#) for school communities

Attendee questions and panel answer responses

1. Can you please share the three steps on managing boundaries mentioned in the webinar?

Step 1 assess your comfort and confidence in setting this boundary (consider the benefits and costs, what you are valuing e.g., family time, who the conversation is with e.g., a colleague who is also a friend).

Step 2 develop your skills in setting boundaries (start with low-stakes boundaries for practice, and consider reflecting back requests, stating your boundary without undue detail, and explaining a shared value it relates to).

Step 3 reflect and act to maintain boundaries, revising when necessary (consider a kind and benevolent interpretation at first if people forget your boundary, and regularly reflect on what your boundaries are achieving).

(Source: Herbst, R., Sump, C., & Riddle, S. (2023). Staying in bounds: A framework for setting workplace boundaries to promote physician wellness. *Journal of Hospital Medicine*)

2. How to boundary set in environments where the work culture is against boundary setting?

It is important to stay true to personal boundaries despite a challenging work culture. Being aware of what you can and can't control is important and staying true to your own boundaries is key. And not comparing your own boundaries with others. Compromising your boundaries for others can ultimately come at a personal sacrifice.

Remember to:

Reflect on your values as this will support you to set and maintain boundaries.

Consider conversations that are needed for you to put in place healthy boundaries.

Identify where you want to put boundaries in place and prioritise these.

Start with small actions around your highest priorities.

Practice self-compassion: remember that boundaries are a process not a one off and be consistent in your approach. Schools are workplaces so some flexibility and compromise may be warranted.

3. How do you support staff to prioritise their own wellbeing?

- Many existing educator wellbeing initiatives focus on self-care and individual strategies yet a whole of setting approach to staff wellbeing is also needed.
- Education leaders are pivotal in fostering wellbeing. By prioritising staff wellbeing, leaders can create a culture of care, autonomy and trust.
- There is a growing body of evidence that links educator wellbeing with educational outcomes for children and young people.
- When there's a shared language around wellbeing, and structures and processes to minimise work-related stressors, then individual staff feel supported and part of positive community.

- Staff need to work together to create an environment and culture where all members of the learning community feel supported and can flourish.
- The mental health and wellbeing of staff, students and parents is a shared responsibility.
- Be You has a number of resources to support [Educator Wellbeing](#), including the Educator Wellbeing Plan.

4. What are some practical strategies to ensure I maintain healthy boundaries?

Implement boundaries that are realistic.

Commit to one boundary to action. Start small to build your confidence in setting boundaries.

Verbalise your commitments to a colleague, friend or commit to paper.

Prioritise your boundaries.

Utilise technology to protect your time by activating settings such as “do not disturb” or “night-time “ mode.

Check in, place in your diary a date to reflect, review and re-establish boundaries.

5. How do we introduce the concept of boundaries without it seeming unreasonable, especially for educators who usually say yes to everything.

If you are in a leadership role with this person, help them prioritise their work and share your expectations of the quality expected. We can't do everything perfectly, and good enough is often enough. Role model your own work boundaries, to help normalise the behaviour i.e.: leaving on time, taking breaks. Also, prioritise staff wellbeing in your actions, so that your staff can see that your behaviour matches your language.

6. What can I do if I am concerned about a colleague?

Sometimes, we can notice a colleague behaving outside of their usual self. They may appear more stressed or overwhelmed with work tasks or avoiding tasks that they might have previously enjoyed i.e.: eating lunch in the staffroom. Using the NIP framework- [Notice, Inquire, Provide](#), can be a helpful way to check in with your colleagues. If you notice some changes, gently inquire (if appropriate) and ask them how they are going. Generally, people are appreciative of the check in and opportunity to talk about what might be going on for them. Sometimes, a colleague might disclose they are struggling. Encourage they speak with the Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) or make an appointment with their GP. If you are very concerned following the conversation, follow your internal procedures about how to help them get immediate support and notify your leadership team.

7. Boundaries are often different for each person. How can they be negotiated in a positive way?

- Negotiating realistic time frames and expectations with others can enable you to say ‘yes’ to a new project/task but not cost you in compromising yourself in the process. It

means you can say 'yes' but by setting and negotiating realistic SMART objectives will reduce your stress levels.

- You may be able to delegate and ask the support of others to help you to maintain your healthy boundaries.
- The people in your life that will accept and respect you are saying 'no' or delaying a reply or negotiating a 'yes' on some agreed conditions are generally wonderfully supportive people in your life that will help you to maintain healthy boundaries in the long term. As these people are the people in your life that want the best for you.
- Remember, when you are seeking people to respect your new boundaries know that modelling this respect of other people's boundaries assists this process.
- People won't intuitively know what your boundaries are so by clearly verbalising them to others can be a very helpful way of maintaining them.
- Boundaries are not a 'set and forget' there needs to be some flexibility in reassessing them when necessary.
- Let go of being afraid of 'letting people down' as 'letting down yourself' is a far greater burden to live with in the long term. People are far more open to negotiation than what you may think, and you will never know if you never start by asking...
- The people in your life that genuinely care about you will support you when you say 'no' and will be always open to negotiation.

8. Great webinar! Can we attend any other live sessions or events?

You most certainly can! See the links below for live sessions.

[Be You Conversations for schools - Be You](#)

[Be You Spotlight for schools - Be You](#)

We also available are a range of previous [In Focus webinar recordings and resources](#)

How do we contact our Be You Consultant?

If you are a **participating Be You school or service** and you would like to get in contact with your Be You Consultant, visit beyou.edu.au. Log in to your account, then click on 'My Learning Community'. Click on 'Supports' and you will find your Be You Consultant listed there if you are an Action Team leader.

If you are **not a participating school**, then please complete [this web form](#) and we will get back to you. The following subject line should be selected: Find out more about Be You for Schools.

Reflective questions or activities to utilise in Action Team meetings and/or other relevant school meetings:

- How does your school currently approach improving the wellbeing of the staff?
- Does the current school culture support healthy boundaries between work and personal life? In what way? Can this be supported in any way?
- Are there any barriers to supporting healthy boundaries? Brainstorm some ideas and share resources about how you might work to challenge these barriers.
- How can you role model to other staff (or even students) that you have intentional boundaries to support your wellbeing?
- Individually, you may like to explore the Wheel of Life. Melinda shared an example of this using two wheels.

Relevant links:

- <https://iyarn.com/blog/the-digital-wheel-of-life/>
- <https://www.schoolofcoachingpsychology.com/post/the-wheel-of-life-a-psychologically-informed-coaching-tool>
- What external mental health agencies does your school have relationships with? What are the referral processes for these agencies? Are staff aware of local mental health service providers?
- Can you think of someone who practices healthy boundaries? What might they be doing differently that you could adopt?

Mental health services and support helplines

Mental Health Services and Support

<p>Beyond Blue</p> <p>24/7 mental health support service</p> <p>1300 22 4636 beyondblue.org.au</p>	<p>headspace</p> <p>Online support and counselling to young people aged 12 to 25</p> <p>1800 650 890 (9am to 1am daily)</p> <p>For wechat, visit: headspace.org.au/ehespace</p>	<p>Kids Helpline</p> <p>24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services for children and young people aged 5 to 25</p> <p>1800 55 1800 kidshelpline.com.au</p>	<p>1800 RESPECT</p> <p>24/7 support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic violence and abuse</p> <p>1800 737 732 1800respect.org.au</p>	<p>QLife</p> <p>LGBTI peer support and referral</p> <p>1800 184 527 (3pm to midnight daily)</p> <p>qlife.org.au (online chat 3pm to midnight local time, including over holidays.)</p>
<p>Lifeline</p> <p>24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services</p> <p>13 11 14 lifeline.org.au</p>	<p>Suicide Call Back</p> <p>24/7 crisis support and counselling service for people affected by suicide</p> <p>1300 659 467 suicidecallbackservice.org.au</p>	<p>Mensline</p> <p>24/7 counselling service for men</p> <p>1300 78 99 78 mensline.org.au</p>	<p>13YARN</p> <p>24/7 crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</p> <p>13 92 76 13yarn.org.au</p>	

If you are concerned about someone at risk of immediate harm, call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.



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You can view and download this poster from the [Be You website](https://www.be-you.org.au)