

## Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Amanda Hess**

[How to Love Yourself No Matter What](#) with Amanda Hess

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

Setting boundaries can feel like a radical and scary act, especially if you've spent years people-pleasing. But learning to say no is one of the kindest things you can do for yourself and the people you love. Listen in, I'm going to tell you exactly how to do this.

This show is for women who've been labeled, misdiagnosed, or misunderstood. Whether you have a diagnosis or just know deep down that you experience life differently, this is your space to stop fixing yourself and start trusting who you already are. My name is Amanda Hess. Let's go.

Hello, my friends, and welcome to the podcast. Today, we are going to talk about why boundaries are hard but necessary for deep feelers.

As a deep feeler, as somebody who feels something deeply and strongly, you've likely learned to over-function emotionally. You've likely learned to over-function in relationships, in your job, in your entire life. You've likely learned how to take responsibility for other people's comfort, for other people's feelings, and for other people's reactions. And the reality is, is that you were taught, either implicitly or explicitly, that your job is to keep the peace and not to protect your peace.

And the thing that we've learned about that, and the thing that you've probably are running into, is that this isn't sustainable, especially if you're neurodivergent, if you're highly sensitive, or and you have a history of masking. And all masking is really pretending that you're fine when you're not. Pretending you're happy when you're not, rearranging your expression, the way you interact, so that you can create safety with other people.

So, what ends up happening is that boundary setting feels like disconnection. And so we don't do it because if we set a boundary, then we have to take responsibility for somebody being unhappy. We have to take responsibility for somebody being angry, frustrated, upset. And because for so long, we've created our own inner safety from ensuring that other people are okay, this breaks the whole model of how we handle things, and it makes it exceptionally difficult for us.

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

Because we end up being in a situation where we feel like we're between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, we're burnt out, we're tired, we're exhausted, we're resentful of always having to worry about everybody else and having nobody else worry about us. And on the other hand, we also have this overwhelming feeling of, I'm not doing it good enough because no matter how hard I try and no matter how much I do, people are still mad at me.

So, when we start breaking this apart and we start looking at setting a boundary and when somebody says to you, "Hey, you need to set a boundary here," you find yourself in a position where you don't feel like you can set it unless the other person agrees. And so when we start talking about setting a boundary and having that be for you and not for them and giving them back their feelings and giving them back what they need to take care of on their own and you taking control over what you can control, what you need to know is that guilt is going to show up. You are going to feel guilty.

And I really just want to normalize the feeling of guilt when we go through this process of trying to set boundaries and have structure around our time, around our emotions, around what's important to us. I want to normalize that with this will come guilt. And just because you're feeling guilt doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. It simply means that you're doing something new. So when we try to change something and move into doing something new, it's going to feel awkward. It's going to bring up negative emotion. It's going to feel bumpy.

One thing, an analogy that I have shared with my clients this week that I think might help you, is that I'm an adult figure skater. So I came back to skating after a 30-year break, and I love skating. Skating is so much fun for me. However, there are certain things that I do that I'm not doing the way they are meant to be done. And one of them is my camel spin. And you can always look that up if you want, but ultimately, think like airplane in yoga class. So you have one leg that is perpendicular, I think that's the right

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

word, to the other, and you want to have a 90-degree angle and then you spin.

So, it is a lot of work for me to get to the point where this spin even worked at all. And I finally, many years later, figured out how to start getting to a place where I could spin properly, which is amazing. However, my leg isn't high enough. And so I have to tilt my body down further to be in the right position. But when I do, my friends, it does not feel good. It feels bad. I feel off balance. I feel like I'm going to fall on my face. It feels uncomfortable. I pop out of it. And I was saying to my friend who I skate with that as soon as I try to do that, it feels terrible. And she just looked at me and said, "You're just going to have to get over it feeling terrible. You're just going to have to proceed with it not feeling good until it does." And I just thought that was such sage advice that I want to offer to you here that is very relevant when we talk about this topic.

So, there are many times in my life where I have found myself in a position where I said yes to something that I wanted to say no to, a vacation that I didn't want to go on, an activity that I didn't want to do, a dinner that I didn't want to attend. And what will come up inside of my body when that happens is I'll feel the tension of, I really don't want to do this. But then feeling the guilt that I should be doing it, and then having the mental gymnastics of leaping back and forth between the two, and I start having this tug of war in my brain.

And so, I see this happening with my clients all of the time. It's normal to have this go on, but we want to move towards something better. So we look at this and go, "Okay, what happens when I feel guilt?" And we really want to start slowing this down. So, when my friend asked if I would pick her up at the airport and I was like, you know, I actually have a lot of things to do, or I have nothing to do, but I want to stay home and read my book and I really don't want to drive her and she has access to Uber and a taxi. When I go to say no, when I feel that guilt, what do I do?

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

And you know, it's one of those things that you can notice. Did you freeze when she asked you and then say yes as a reaction to get rid of that guilty feeling? Did you say no, but then instead of enjoying your book, you replayed it all night? Did you try to smooth it over or potentially lie or fabricate what you were doing so it seemed like you really were truly busy so she wouldn't be mad at you?

These are things that we do. These are things that we do to try and manage other people. And we think we're doing it for them. But here's the spoiler alert. We're doing it for ourselves. And when I say that, what I mean is that we would rather manage their emotions to feel safe than manage our own emotions and let them feel whatever they need to feel. We don't want to feel the discomfort of disappointing someone, so we'll say yes. And then if we say no, then we have this guilt, and so we don't want to deal with the guilt. So we end up going back and forth on this and continuously tipping into this.

So, what I will tell you is the first step here is understanding, "Oh, this is guilt." Like guilt has shown up here again. And guilt is a normal human emotion. We are supposed to feel it. Guilt is an emotion. Emotions are messengers, and they are telling you how you're receiving the world around you. So now you know. Oh, I receive somebody asking me to do something as being something that I have to do and that something I have to manage that I have to put their needs above my own. And so that's interesting that I feel this feeling in my body.

And what I will tell you is that we don't want to get into an argument with your brain. We don't want to have this back and forth going on in your brain. I wanted to say no and I should be allowed to say no. But that was a really terrible thing to do and she's probably mad. I'm allowed to care about myself. Well, but I had time. I could have done it. She's probably really upset. She might not talk to me. My friendship might be over. And then we go back and forth and back and forth. And this happens in so many different scenarios.

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

And what I will say is that we need to start in the body. So, rather than getting into the tug of war with the brain, which is typically really ineffective and will keep you in that spinning thought place forever, we just want to regulate our nervous system. And we just want to really tap into nervous system regulation, to ground ourselves as much as we can and to move through the emotion, because guilt is like every other emotion. It comes up, it comes down. We don't need to interfere. If we don't interfere with our feelings, if we don't block our feelings, if we allow our feelings, they will pass through.

One of the things that I often say to my clients is just telling yourself nothing has gone wrong here. This is just a feeling and no feeling lasts forever. So, guilt is normal, but it's not the boss. So, guilt is a human emotion. But guilt is not a moral compass.

So you were socialized to feel guilt for meeting your own needs. And this is true. As women, we have been told since birth to serve other people, that other people's needs are more important than our own needs. From childhood, from being a tiny little human, we are taught to care for others, to think about how other people feel, to consider in many cases how our behavior is making adults feel. Let that sink in. You're making mommy feel really bad right now, is kind of crazy.

So what we do is we notice that this is something that is happening because we're programmed to feel this way. So of course it feels bad. And what we want to go to is just moving into the experience of these are thoughts and beliefs that I have that may not be true. These thoughts might not be true. Now, what I'll say to you is no thought is true. No thought is true. It's just a thought. No thought is true, no thought is untrue. You should feel guilty. You shouldn't feel guilty. Well, both are true. Which is really good to know. There's no truth in thinking. There's just emotions that it creates and results that come out of it.

If you're finding yourself in a position of not being able to meet your own needs and not being able to advocate for yourself and constantly being in a

## Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers

stress response and being pissed off at other people, but then ultimately also so disappointed in yourself, when you're moving through this like muddy water, you have to realize that we need to change this. And this is where we can start. And it's it's a big chunk. It's a big piece of the puzzle.

So can we let guilt simply be a visitor and not the driver? Can we notice the emotion of guilt? Can we find the emotion of guilt in the body and allow it, notice it, but not let it actually create the action that you're taking, not by resisting it, but instead noticing it and recognizing it and understanding it and knowing where it comes from and ultimately letting it pass through.

A mantra that you could potentially lean into is feeling guilt doesn't mean I've done something wrong, it means I'm rewriting an old script. You could write this down and then just write three ways that confirm this for yourself that allow you to think differently about this. How is this true? Three different ways that this is true. Asking yourself impossible questions like that allows you to grow your brain. Don't be afraid of the discomfort.

The second thing that you need to know is that boundaries are for you. Boundaries are not rules for them. One of my biggest pet peeves that I hear is so-and-so is not respecting my boundaries. That's not a thing. Boundaries are not ultimatums. They are not behavior control tactics, okay? A true boundary is, "If X happens, I will do Y to protect my energy." And what that really means is that if, say, you start yelling at me, I'm going to go home. It can mean, I don't know, I'm just thinking of kids' examples, I guess.

If you break the rules, you're going to be grounded. That would be a boundary because you have control there. But when you're looking at another human being who you're not a parent to, if you do this thing, if you yell at me, if you show up at my work unannounced, if you make a snarky comment about my parenting in front of my kids, this is what I'm going to do. It's not something you announce. It's something you do. You simply remove yourself. You know what? I'm not here for you talking to my kids

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

like that. I'm going to go home. That's it. There's no fight. We don't threaten the boundary. We enforce the boundary.

You can't force people to respect your limits, but you can respect them yourself. So, if my messages go unanswered after three reminders, I will stop following up. Could be a boundary with a friend, right? This is not about them. That's so important to understand. This is about you. So the mantra that you could use, that you could lean into could be, this is not about them, this is about how I care for myself.

Now, that's the action part of this, right? But we have to look at what is that going to bring up for you? And it's going to bring up a lot of emotion. There's no doubt. So now, how do we become okay with setting that boundary? How do we become okay with, "Hey, when you do X, I'm going to do Y," and really letting that be a power move for you, something that improves your life, something that improves the quality of your life, not something against them, but something for you. And one of the things we really need to do is we need to give people back their feelings. We have to give people back their feelings and we have to tend to our own.

So, it's important to understand that you are not responsible for managing someone else's disappointment, irritation, or judgment. When you set a boundary and someone gets upset, that doesn't make you wrong. That means that you are honoring your needs. One of the hardest changes when it comes to thoughts and beliefs is I'm not responsible for how somebody else thinks or for how somebody else feels or for how somebody else acts. And that is always true.

And what I like to think of is I am going to be responsible for my emotional experience. And so I'm going to honor and process my emotions. And then I'm going to let you have the gift of doing that for yourself. And it is a gift because at the end of the day, when you're not telling somebody they should be happy or they should be okay with something or they should be this or they should be that, when you're not even thinking that because you're just thinking, I've just got to honor and protect myself here and show

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

up the way I need to show up for you and for me, but for me most importantly, then I can let you do what you need to do here. And we can just determine if this is going to be a match or not based on that.

One of the things that you could ask yourself is, is this mine or am I carrying this for someone else? And I want to give you an example because I was just coaching on this today. One of my clients was telling me that she was going on a holiday and she wanted to make sure that everybody was going to have a great holiday. And that is such a sneaky thought because if you think it's your job to make sure your family has a great holiday, how are you going to do that? How will you judge that? By their happiness? By their lack of fighting? By their gratitude? No. You don't want to do that. You're going to lose. It's not going to be good.

How do I know? I've been to Hawaii with teenagers who are mad that they're in Hawaii and I live in Canada. So trust me on this. Mine is to provide the experience that I want to provide, that provides the opportunity for my kids to be happy. Theirs is to decide whether or not they're happy in this. So I release what's mine and I make space for what is. And that could be the mantra, I release what's not mine, and I make space for what is.

Once we have that sort of set in place, right, where we are understanding that we're going to have some guilt and we're going to allow the guilt, that the boundaries are for us and they're not for them and so therefore we take control of that and we give them back their feelings. They're allowed to be mad about the boundary, they're allowed to have thoughts about the boundary, they don't have to agree about the boundary. And we just tend to our own emotions that will come up with that, right? Taking care of your guilt, taking care of your frustration, whatever it is.

Now we want to really think about how do we do this in such a way that we can feel like that's showing up the way we want to show up. And I find the best way to do this is to ground your boundaries in self-love and not just self-protection. So yes, a boundary is about you, but we can ground the boundary in love.

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

What I find is that when we have fear-based boundaries, like, "I need to do this because you're so much and you're too much for me and you're so awful around me and so I need to put this boundary in place," when we do that, it collapses under pressure because there is still this drive for that person to be different. Versus love-based boundaries. And love-based boundaries don't change the boundary. It's not a people-pleasing boundary. Instead, it's leaning into unconditional love for yourself and for the other person.

One way that I like to think about boundaries that I think is exceptionally useful is this person has everything they need to learn how to take care of this for themselves, and I have everything I need as long as I take care of everything for myself. So I release this person from needing to be any particular way for me to feel emotionally safe. So you want to really frame a boundary with love. And what I mean by that is you don't even need to change the words, but you need to look at the intention. If the intention is, "She's such a bitch, I'm going to put this boundary in place," that is probably not going to be received well. And the reason why is because of the way that it's given.

And our actions, our words, they have tone because of the intention behind it. And even if there was tone that was inferred that wasn't there, if your tone was I love you deeply and unconditionally, when the person objected, your response would be different. So, I really highly recommend learning how to tap into unconditional love for you and unconditional love for them. Which is a feeling. Love is a feeling that comes from your body. It's not an action, it's not permission, it's none of those things. It's just tapping into what does love feel like in my body and how do I push that out into the world. So you want to frame your no as an act of care and not rejection.

And a reframe could be something like, I'm not saying no to push you away, but I'm saying it to stay connected to myself. And that can be the end of the statement. We don't need to continue, we don't need to explain ourselves incessantly. You don't even need to say it. But you do want to

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

tap into it because it's going to really help you deliver this in a way that feels like it's aligned within your own values.

Now, we do need to talk about nervous system regulation on its own here because nervous system regulation here is the foundation. The guilt, the freeze, the over-explaining, that's not just your mindset. That's your nervous system showing up for you. So your nervous system is going to identify this as an emergency because it's new, because it feels scary, because it feels like we're not going to be part of the group, because it feels like rejection. And so we must regulate first and then respond.

We don't, as much as possible, because you're human and we know none of us do this perfectly, but we don't just react. We pause. We can use tools like 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Five things you see, four things you feel, three things you hear, two things you smell, one thing you taste. You can put your hand on your chest, breathe in, hold, breathe out. Three times. You can go put your feet in cold water. You can go for a brisk walk. You can orient yourself. You can name all of your surroundings aloud.

This is about creating emotional safety. This is about letting your nervous system come down from a 10 to a 9, to an 8 before we move forward. Boundaries are often better placed when we're not in distress because we have the ability to understand what we're doing, why we're doing it, and how we're doing it. And we can be intentional. And intentionality is incredibly important here. When you are a highly sensitive person, when you are a neurodivergent person, when you are a deep feeler, you are the boss of your feelings. Which means you have to be the boss. Which doesn't mean we clamp them down and shut them down and don't let them out. That's not a boss, that's a captor. We're not a captor of our feelings. We are the boss of our feelings. We are the leader of our feelings.

So, we put ourselves in a position where we can start creating some success. We understand that the process of setting boundaries is healthy and important and something that is going to give us a lot of value, that it's something that's going to allow us to be much more whole and healthy in

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

our relationships. So, we are able to do that when we are intentional. When we walk through this process.

So, when you're doing nervous system regulation, a mantra you could use, that you could think about, you could write down is safety lives in my body, not in their approval. But we use this for us and not against them. Boundaries are acts of love, not punishment.

So, just some reminders here. You can feel guilt and still honor your needs. That can happen at the same time. It's a radical thought process to believe, "Oh, I can have this guilt and be allowing this guilt and still honor my needs." Both can exist at the same time. Boundaries are yours to hold, not theirs to obey. Super important that you remind yourself of this. This is for me, not for them.

Self-love is a tool. So, we use it to stay grounded. We use it to stay clear and we use it to stay connected. What I also will say about self-love is it's a practice. And I would actually say that all of this is a practice. Boundaries are a practice. They're a living, breathing thing. Self-love is a practice. Nervous system regulation is a practice. That means that we don't just do it once and then we just let it go. It means that as soon as we notice things are wacky, where do we start? In the body, in love, into setting boundaries from an intentional space.

You are allowed to disappoint others in order to be at peace with yourself. This probably feels untrue right now, and that's okay. For many of my clients, this is a process that we work through together over the period of months. It is something that we learn through specificity and through repetition. And that's why coaching is so valuable. What I want you to know is if this episode hit home for you, if you're tired of feeling like the emotional sponge in every relationship, if you want support setting loving boundaries without the guilt spiral, I'd love to help you.

## **Ep #266: Why Boundaries are Hard but Necessary for Deep Feelers**

I offer free one-to-one clarity calls where we will look at your specific patterns and explore what's actually going on to help you move forward. All you have to do is go to [amandahess.ca/bookacall](https://amandahess.ca/bookacall) to set yours up.

My friends, this is what I've got for you today. I can't wait to hear what you have to say about it. Make sure to find me on Instagram or on TikTok. It's The Amanda Hess. And otherwise, I will see you here next time. Bye for now.

Thanks so much for listening. You can look forward to a new episode of this podcast every week. And hey, if you like this podcast, do me a favor and leave a review. When you do, it helps this podcast grow, and it allows me to help more women just like you. And if you just know that you need help putting this all together, why don't you book a free consult with me? We can talk about you and what's happening in your life and put a real plan in place to manage the stress and anxiety for good. Just head on over to [amandahess.ca/bookacall](https://amandahess.ca/bookacall) to set that up.