BOUNDARY ROLE-PLAY

Practise the conversation before you need it.

Boundaries are about whether time, attention and capacity are protected. Saying it out loud is the hard part. This takes ten minutes with a colleague, or on your own.

How it works

1. Pick a scenario. One person plays the other side and reads the opening line.
2. Say the boundary out loud, using the shape on the right.
3. Swap roles, then debrief together.

The shape: name it, set it, offer it

Name it. Say what's on your plate. "I'm at capacity this week with X and Y."

Set it. Say what you can't do. "I can't take this on as well."

Offer it. Give a way forward. "What would you like me to put down to make room?"

Three scenarios

SCENARIO 1

The 5pm ask

Your boss adds a task at 5pm on Thursday, due Friday morning. You're already full.

OPENING LINE

"Can you squeeze this in before tomorrow?"

TRY SAYING

"I can, but not without dropping something. Which of these two should come off?"

WATCH FOR

Apologising before you've said it.

SCENARIO 2

The favour you can't take

A peer asks you to cover half of their project. You're stretched.

OPENING LINE

"You're so good at this. Could you just take the second half?"

TRY SAYING

"I can't take that on this month. I can walk you through how I'd approach it."

WATCH FOR

A "maybe" that really means no.

SCENARIO 3 · FOR MANAGERS

The midnight reply

You sent a message late, and a team member answered within minutes. Raise it the next morning.

OPENING LINE

"No worries, I was up anyway."

TRY SAYING

"Thanks for the quick reply. You don't need to answer after hours, and I'll stop sending messages that late."

WATCH FOR

What your behaviour tells the team.

Debrief

What was hardest to say? What did the other person hear? What would you change next time?