Boundaries: What the Research Says

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How the 120Reign™ Guide makes boundaries work

In the Queen's Philosophy, boundaries are the foundation of everything that follows. A queen protects her energy, her time and her peace, because she cannot reign over a life she never guards.

Most advice treats boundaries as a one-time decision: say no once and move on. The research below shows why that rarely lasts. Boundaries are a skill, and skills are built through practice and regular check-ins. That is why the 120Reign™ Guide returns to boundaries again and again: in protected Reign Days™ each week, and in reflections each month, each season and each year. Over the guide's long horizon of seven years to rebuild and ten years to master, boundaries become less something you set and more something you live.

Bottom line

Research on boundaries spans several fields. A meta-analysis of 427 effect sizes found that conflict between work and family life is consistently linked to lower well-being, at work, at home and in health overall. A second meta-analysis found that mentally switching off from work during time off is linked to less exhaustion and better well-being. Boundary-setting skills can be learned: in randomized trials, assertiveness training improved people's ability to express their needs, with gains still present one year later, and was linked to lower stress and anxiety. Research on women's health has also linked habitually silencing one's own needs to depressive symptoms. Together, these findings support protecting personal time and practicing boundaries as a regular habit. The 120Reign™ Guide itself has not been tested in a clinical study.

What the research shows

Switching off is linked to less exhaustion

A meta-analysis of studies including 38,124 employees found that psychological detachment, mentally leaving work at work during time off, was linked to less emotional exhaustion, better sleep and greater life satisfaction (Wendsche & Lohmann-Haislah,

2017). Protected time works best when the mind gets to leave too.

When work and home collide, well-being suffers

A meta-analysis of 427 effect sizes examined conflict between work and family life in both directions: work spilling into home, and home spilling into work (Amstad et al., 2011). Both kinds of conflict were consistently linked to poorer outcomes at work, at home and in overall well-being and health. Clear lines between life's roles are one way to reduce that spillover.

Boundaries are a skill you can learn

In a randomized trial, 210 adults were assigned to an eight-week online assertiveness program, guided or self-guided, or to a wait-list (Hagberg et al., 2023). Both program groups became more able to express their needs and stand up for themselves than the wait-list group, and the gains were still present at a one-year follow-up.

In another randomized trial with college students, an eight-session program built around assertiveness and related skills was linked to greater reductions in stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms than a control group (ElBarazi et al., 2024). This is a single study in one student population.

Silencing your own needs has a cost

A review of research on women's health found that habitually silencing one's own thoughts and needs to keep the peace in relationships, called self-silencing, has been consistently linked to depressive symptoms and to poorer well-being (Maji & Dixit, 2019). Boundaries give your own needs a voice.

What the research cannot yet show

The 120Reign™ Guide's approach to boundaries has not been tested in a study; this page applies findings from related research. The work-family, detachment and self-silencing findings come mostly from observational studies, so they show links, not proof that boundaries cause better health. The assertiveness trials measured a learned skill, not boundary-setting in daily life over many years, and one was a single study of students. Most of the research also focuses on work and family, while boundaries in friendships and extended family are less studied.

Disclaimer

This summary is for educational purposes only and is not medical or mental health advice. It describes published research on the principles behind the guide; the 120Reign™ Guide has not been tested in a clinical study. If you are dealing with a relationship that feels unsafe, or with ongoing stress, anxiety or low mood, please reach out to a licensed healthcare or mental health provider.

References

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