

# BOUNDARIES AND MARGINS

How to say “No” and “Yes” to the Right Things



## QUOTES:

“Healthy women have boundaries.”

“Life is Long.”

“You can have it all –  
but not all at the same time.”

# What Makes Balance Hard?

*Answers from participants:*

- So many GOOD things, and I want to be involved in them all.
- I can never get on top of anything. The second I get something done, it seems to be undone.
- Procrastination or getting carried away doing things I enjoy at the expense of things I should do but don't enjoy.
- Every area of my life seems to be a top priority--all the time.
- Feeling like I'm never doing enough – worry about what others think
- Wanting to offer my kids the opportunity to experience as much as possible
- My own expectations of how things are supposed to be/feel/look
- So many demands . . . so many dreams . . . so little time

# Specific Situations that Make Balance Hard

- Too much stuff in my house
- Being a single mom
- Working full time/commuting
- Having a spouse that works all the time
- Children getting older--more outside influences take their time and attention
- Too many responsibilities--needy neighbors, aging parents, community involvement
- Lack of example from my own mom about how to do enough but not too much
- Lack of strong habits and routines and a way of quickly making sure decisions.
- Exhaustion

# Boundaries and Margins

**Keep your boundaries tight around the things that matter most to you, leaving margins around the edges.**

- **Develop criteria for what you will and won't do.**
- **Learn to say “no” without guilt.**
- **Increase joy and decrease stress as you create space for inspiration, serendipity, unexpected problems and fun.**

# Criteria for Choosing Activities

- Will it be interesting and meaningful to you?
- Will it use your own unique talents well?
- Will it be good for your family?
- Will it add to or detract from balance?
- Are you the only one who can do it?
- Is now the right time in your life to do this?
- Does this feel right?

## **General Rule of Thumb:**

Do that which only you can do and that which needs to be done now.

As you decide what to do and what not to do, remember that there are things that need to be done but don't need to be done well.

**Adopt these mottos:**

“If a thing is just barely worth doing, then just barely do it.”

“Balance involves letting go of a lot of things a little bit.”

# Tips for Saying “No”

- Don't make decisions in the moment. Say “I'll have to think about this and talk with my family.”
- Keep it simple. “I'm sorry but that won't work for my family.”
- What works for you?



# Margins

**Why do pages need margins?**

**Why do people need margins?**

With all that we juggle as mothers our lives can quickly become overloaded and we can start to feel frazzled, unbalanced, neglected, overworked, resentful and unhappy. Motherhood is not the season for perfect balance. Let's face it, we are going to be giving a lot to our children and our families in this stage of our lives. We can, however, avoid perpetual overload by restoring margins to our lives. Remember in middle school how your teacher stressed over and over that you needed to be sure to leave margins on your page? It would make the paper look neat and enable the reader to get a clearer, uncluttered message. So it is with our lives as mothers. We need to make sure we build margins in our lives, uncluttered space and time in our brains and in our schedules that enable us to feel and think and enjoy....that free up space in our minds and our days for the unexpected for serendipity for loving for those

**Why is it hard for us to  
build margins into our lives?**

# Margins are hard because:

- Our own perfectionism
- Comparison with others
- Discontent
- Our desire to be making a difference and using our talents
- Overload seems normal and necessary
- The idea that busy = productive
- Time-suckers (TV and Internet) fill our margins

# The Cost of Overload

- **Mental:** hard to think clearly and focus, can lead to Alzheimers and mental breakdown
- **Emotional:** Leaves us little time and energy to enjoy life. No room to anticipate events or reminisce. No time for beauty. Makes us resentful of the work we are doing. Leaves us feeling guilty, impatient, irritable, unfulfilled.
- **Physical:** Exhausted, body gets run-down, sickness
- **Spiritual:** No space in our lives for God to act.
- **Social:** No time to foster relationships. Real loving takes margins. Love is process, not productivity-oriented.
- **Progress:** No space for introspection, goal-setting or prioritization. No space for those things that are important but not urgent.

# Adjust your Load

- Assess what you're doing and make changes
- Limit your accessibility
- Limit some choices
- Figure in extra time
- Simplify high-maintenance possessions
- Reduce debt, avoid new debt
- Assess and limit media and technology
- Reduce discontent – embrace “enough”
- Protect time to “just be”

# Ideas from Participants

- Remember that a "Yes" to one thing is a "No" to something else
- Say no to sports/music, etc. for a year/short period of time, and then add in a little bit at a time
- Schedule (and protect) "me" time in my day to meditate, read, pray, think, do yoga, whatever gives you a chance to recharge.
- Put "play time" on the calendar and to-do list
- Protect scheduled activities. Say, "I've got something scheduled then" if asked to do something when you've scheduled personal or family time.
- Use a timer to get essential work done and create more time for fun
- Keep in mind, "Be here!" and "Be present!"

# More Great Ideas

- Make morning/evening routines
- Ensure you hold weekly Sunday Sessions
- Turn off electronic devices (and message alerts)
- Let the house be a little dirtier so we have time to hold our babies/enjoy our children
- Crockpot meals – make dinner right after breakfast
- Pick three things to do from the "to do" list for each day (one for yourself, one for your family, one for a job or pursuit outside your home). Anything extra is bonus.
- Do the hard thing and the right thing and get out of commitments that really aren't working and don't feel right.



# Challenge

Choose ONE THING you will do  
To find more peace and joy in your life  
through creating appropriate  
boundaries and adjusting your load to  
create margins in your life.