



Setting boundaries at work

Words you can use, whatever your role

A boundary is a limit that protects your time, energy and wellbeing. It is how you say what you can and cannot do, kindly and clearly. In dentistry the pull to keep saying yes is strong, because you care about patients and the team.

Why it is hard

- You do not want to let anyone down.
- The day is already full, and the next patient is waiting.
- Saying no can feel like being difficult, or not a team player.

Words you can use

"I can fit that in, but it means my break will be late. Is that okay?"

"I am happy to help. I need five minutes to finish setting up first."

"I cannot stay back tonight, but I can tomorrow."

"That is not something I can take on this week. Can we look at it next week?"

If you lead a team

- Say out loud that breaks are part of the day, and protect them.
- Check before you add to someone's load: "Do you have room for this?"
- Thank people when they say no kindly, so it feels safe to do it again.

Tips

- Start small, with a low-stakes boundary.
- Be kind and clear. You do not have to over-explain.
- Expect it to feel uncomfortable at first. That usually passes.
- Practise the words out loud before you need them.

If you need support

Lifeline	13 11 14	24-hour crisis support
Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636	support by phone and online
Dental Practitioner Support	1800 377 700	registered practitioners; free, confidential, 24/7
In an emergency, call 000		

Look after yourself, and each other.