

# ON BEING MEN

## BOUNDARIES IN ACTION



**MEN'S GUIDE TO INNER FREEDOM IN 5 ESSENTIAL STEPS**

By Yaron Engler

Founder of **On Being Men**

[www.onbeingmen.com](http://www.onbeingmen.com)

Copyright © 2023 by Yaron Engler

# TABLE OF CONTENT

---

<b>Introduction</b>	Page 3
<b>N.E.V.E.R. Again</b>	Page 6
<b>Understanding Boundaries</b>	Page 7
<b>Table - The Difference Between Walls, Agreements And Boundaries</b>	Page 10
<b>The Five Steps To Master Your Boundaries</b>	Page 12
<b>Step 1 - Notice</b>	Page 12
<b>Step 2 - Establish</b>	Page 16
<b>Step 3 - Verbalise</b>	Page 20
<b>Step 4 - Ensure</b>	Page 26
<b>Step 5 - Reevaluate</b>	Page 28
<b>Additional Support</b>	Page 31
<b>About The Author</b>	Page 33

# INTRODUCTION

---

Hello my friend,

If you're here reading this, you're probably feeling pressure from various corners of your life, and finding time for yourself seems like a constant struggle between work, family and everything else. Juggling all these responsibilities can leave you scratching your head, wondering how to claim a bit of alone time.

Here are some scenarios that might sound familiar.

You're tired of your wife always having an endless to-do list for you. And you're pissed off at yourself for just going along with it while she's calling the shots and still getting angry with you.

Then come the kids – you want to be with them, but there's just no time, and your head spins with everything from work. When they ask for your attention, it feels like a massive burden, and you hate yourself for it. And then that lingering thought in your head reappears: *“Am I a bad dad?”*.

Then there's work, where tasks keep piling up, and it feels like nobody gets you. You're doing so much for others while getting very little in return.

Do you find yourself with an ever-growing cycle of chores, to-do lists, overwhelm and frustration? Are you getting frustrated at people? Maybe even angry at yourself?

It's a neverending story. No break. Ever. Never. Just the continuous hustle and bustle. Downtime has become a distant memory that doesn't seem real or possible anymore..

If this sounds more or less like your struggle, that's exactly why getting a handle on setting boundaries is crucial. It might sound contradictory, but when you learn to set clear boundaries, you can finally feel more free.

Think about boundaries as the walls in a house. Without them, order is impossible as things would just move from one room to another. Plus, you'll feel that your privacy is constantly being invaded. Sounds messy and uncomfortable, isn't it? Well, the same goes for boundaries. **You need to set them so that you can gain the sense of order, freedom, privacy and control that your mind and body need.**

Taking responsibility for setting boundaries empowers and boosts your confidence. As your confidence grows, communicating your needs becomes clearer and easier, earning you more respect and support. Then you see stress start reducing, relationships become fun again and even the intimacy with your wife, which has been long lost, starts to show signs of recovery (And both you and I know how much you crave that). You

suddenly find free time to do things you forgot you loved doing, and the strong sense of freedom and independence just keeps growing.

So, yes, boundaries are important and in case it helps, you're not alone on this journey of not having them set the way you want.

I have been there, and over the last decade, I've spent thousands of hours with men who face similar challenges. The lack of boundaries or even the understanding of what boundaries are is very common, and that's exactly why I've decided to put this guide together for you and the other men.

I've done my best to keep it simple and practical so that it serves as a tool you can apply straight away. While we could explore all the theories and data, the bottom line is that you need something you can work with now, and it needs to bring you the immediate clarity and results you want to see.

So let's begin.

Yaron,

Founder of [On Being Men](#)

[aron@onbeingmen.com](mailto:aron@onbeingmen.com)

# N.E.V.E.R. AGAIN

---

In this guidebook, we will discuss the five simple steps you need to set and maintain your boundaries. We'll use the acronym NEVER with the idea that we want to create a new reality for you where you **never** need to deal with a buildup of frustration, an overload of tasks, a lack of time for yourself, and all the other challenges you're facing for not having your boundaries in place.

The five steps are:

**N**otice

**E**stablish

**V**erbalise

**E**nsure

**R**eevaluate

You'll get full clarity about each step, but before we move on to the steps, let's make sure you understand what boundaries actually are.

# UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES

---

You need to create healthy boundaries to prevent all the pressure we mentioned before from happening and help you create a better future. Boundaries can help you set the tone for how you interact with others and define what's physically and emotionally acceptable in your relationships. They act as clear guidelines preventing others from crossing lines that may cause you harm or discomfort.

It's important to understand that often, the emotions of frustration, resentment or anger that you feel towards others are not really their fault. **It's a sign that you're lacking clear boundaries.** The good news is that by learning to set and maintain boundaries, you gain the power to stay in control, protect yourself, and ensure you're treated the way you want—or exit a relationship with clarity and confidence when that's not an option. Your boundaries are like a new superpower that can help you transform the dynamic of any relationship and create a new reality where you have more control, independence, and freedom as well as better relationships, love, support, understanding and respect from others.

## BOUNDARIES, AGREEMENTS AND EMOTIONAL WALLS

There's often confusion between boundaries, emotional walls and agreements. While agreements are a great set-up that could work in

perfect harmony with boundaries, I would strongly recommend you avoid emotional walls, as nothing good comes out of them.

**Emotional walls** – emotional walls are created as a shield from getting hurt, most likely because of bad past experiences. You might feel that it serves you in the short run, but over time emotional walls create long-lasting problems in relationships.

I've come across many men who, because of fear of rejection, either avoid intimacy or act as nice guys without showcasing their full expression. This gives them a short-term shield from getting hurt, but in the long run, these men often end up alone, lonely or lost for years, lacking the capacity to fulfil their potential or build the relationships they truly desire.

**Agreements** – agreements help set clear expectations, create a better flow, and lessen confusion and conflicts. By setting clear agreements in your relationships, you establish guidelines for behaviour in a way that helps you and the other person know what's going on. Bear in mind that agreements need to be set by both sides while your boundaries are fully in your control.

One obvious agreement in an intimate relationship is marriage, which requires both parties to agree and take the step together. Another example of agreements can be around who's doing the shopping and who's doing the kids pick-ups from school.



To get an even better understanding of the purpose and difference between walls, agreements, and boundaries, look at the table in the next page.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WALLS, AGREEMENTS AND BOUNDARIES

	<b>Walls</b>	<b>Agreements</b>	<b>Boundaries</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Emotional protection and avoidance of vulnerability.	Structure, clarity, and predictability in the relationship.	Balanced and respectful interaction while safeguarding individuality.
<b>Nature</b>	Emotional defences, rigid and non-negotiable.	Explicit guidelines for behaviour, mutually agreed upon	Personal limits, flexible and adaptable
<b>Effect on Communication</b>	Hinder open and honest communication, causing emotional distance.	Enhance communication about expectations and behaviour.	Encourage open and honest communication about personal limits.
<b>Origin</b>	Often a response to past traumas, fear, or lack of trust.	Created to provide structure and clarity, agreed upon by both partners.	Set to maintain a balance between individual needs and the relationship, adaptable and mutually understood.
<b>Expectations</b>	Expect emotional protection and avoidance of vulnerability.	Expect clear guidelines for behaviour, predictability, and accountability.	Expect a balanced, respectful dynamic, the preservation of self-respect and autonomy, and flexibility.
<b>Impact on Relationship:</b>	Tend to strain the relationship, causing disconnection and mistrust.	Can contribute to a healthier and more harmonious relationship by reducing ambiguity.	Promote a strong, balanced relationship where both partners maintain individuality while working together as a team.

By now, you should have a clear grasp of what boundaries are, so let's move forward to see how you can set and maintain them.

**>>> TAKE ACTION**



**Get clear about walls, agreements, and boundaries**

Have a look at the table on the next page and reflect on the following questions:

- Where in your life have you created healthy agreements?
- Where in your life should you create new agreements?
- Where in your life have you built emotional walls, and how are these emotional walls affecting you?
- What could be the outcome of transforming those emotional walls into boundaries?

# THE FIVE STEPS TO MASTER YOUR BOUNDARIES

## STEP 1 – NOTICE

---

Step one on this boundary-setting journey is about growing your self-awareness. You can do it by spending time objectively reflecting on your needs and limits.

As you grow your self-awareness, you will become more aware of the signs that tell you where and why you need those boundaries. To help you recognise those signs, we'll use the acronym **NUCLEAR FOG**, which stands for the following:

**N**o

**F**ear

**U**nnoticed

**O**bligation

**C**onflicts

**G**uilt

**L**ow Self-Esteem

**E**xhaustion

**A**nger

**R**esentment

Let's look at what each one of the NUCLEAR FOG might feel like in your life:

**No:** If you struggle to say 'no' to things and people, you might end up overwhelmed and burnt out from saying 'yes' too much.

**Unnoticed:** Feeling unseen? It could be because your needs and desires aren't being communicated clearly.

**Conflicts:** Do you constantly clash with others? It might be a sign that your expectations and boundaries need more clarity.

**Low Self-Esteem:** Not feeling great about yourself? Maybe you're letting others define your worth by not setting clear boundaries.

**Exhaustion:** Do you constantly feel tired and overwhelmed? It could mean you're not safeguarding your time and well-being.

**Anger:** Do you often feel anger bubbling up? It might be a signal to address and communicate your personal limits.

**Resentment:** Holding onto grudges? It is time for some open communication and setting clear boundaries.

**Fear:** Scared of expressing yourself? It's a nudge to develop boundaries and empower yourself.

**Obligation:** Do you often feel tied down? It's probably time to set boundaries that align with your priorities.

**Guilt:** Is guilt a regular companion? It's time to learn how to take positive action to eliminate it.

## >>> TAKE ACTION

### **REFLECT ON YOUR NUCLEAR FOG**

Pause for a moment to reflect on the NUCLEAR FOG framework, and take notes of any thoughts or realisations about areas in your life where boundaries might be beneficial.

This could be a relationship with continuous conflicts, family gatherings you feel obligated to go to despite the fact that you know that they will last way too long and you'll lose your patience, or a strong feeling of resentment that you've been holding for too long towards someone without dealing with it.

Having gone through the NUCLEAR FOG framework, you probably had some insights popping up. Keep these insights handy as you'll use them in the following section, where we'll dive into the practical side of setting and maintaining boundaries.

## STEP 2 – ESTABLISH

---

Now that you have your radar open to the signs that show you when and where you need to set your boundaries, it's time to take action and establish your boundaries.

### **GUIDELINES TO ESTABLISH YOUR BOUNDARIES:**

#### **BE SPECIFIC**

Define your boundaries clearly because ambiguous boundaries can lead to misunderstandings. Take the time to reflect on what specifically is the problem and what specifically would make a difference for you as you move forward. Instead of saying, "*I need more space,*" which can be interpreted in many different ways, say, "*I need some alone time for an hour each evening .*" You can also add the reason for why you need that time and any other information that can help remove confusion. Keep it simple, though. This will not only help you gain clarity about what you actually want, but it'll also help gain more trust and understanding from the other person.

#### **START SMALL**

If you're new to setting boundaries, begin with smaller, less challenging situations. For example say 'no' in a minor situation where you normally say yes and then regret it. This might include social interactions that you



attend even though you already know you're going to feel bored and disengaged. As you gain confidence, you can gradually tackle more complex issues like asking for more money from clients or a boss, or telling a loved one who hurts you with their words that you will not tolerate it anymore.

## **SET PRIORITIES**

Focus on what truly matters to you. Return to the NUCLEAR FOG framework and identify the strongest pain points or discomfort. Pay attention to the issues that drain most of your energy, and tackle them first. You might observe that establishing a boundary in one specific area could trigger a positive ripple effect elsewhere.

Let's look at this common scenario. You're having a lot of tension at work and you spend days trying to resolve issues without success. At the same time, your wife expresses frustration about not seeing enough of you at home. She wants more time together, with the kids, and reminds you of unfinished household chores, which leads to a build up of tension, anger, and frustration in the relationship.

While addressing all these challenges at once may seem overwhelming, setting a boundary at work can initiate a positive chain reaction. By limiting your work hours and leaving earlier, even if it's just one or two days a week, you create space to refresh your thinking while becoming more present at home. As a result, your wife notices the change through your increased

presence, involvement with the kids, and willingness to contribute to household chores. This single work boundary has a domino effect, resolving tensions across the board.

### **BE CONSISTENT**

Once you set your boundary, be consistent and stick to your established limits to create a sense of trust and reliability. This is key to reinforcing your boundaries. So, if you tell people you work with that, you will not work on weekends, but then you send them work emails on Sunday morning, don't be surprised if you start getting calls or emails from them on the weekend. If you don't stay consistent with your boundary, others won't as well.

### **RESPECT THE BOUNDARIES OF OTHERS**

Just as you expect respect for your boundaries, acknowledge and respect the boundaries of others. It's a two-way street. You can even encourage others to set their boundaries as you already know it will improve the relationship.

## >>> TAKE ACTION



### **BOUNDARY CHECK-IN**

Answer the following questions:

- Which of the areas you wrote about in the previous section needs the most urgent attention?
- Once healthy boundaries are established, what would you like to see changing? Be specific.
- What will help you reinforce your boundaries?

## STEP 3 – VERBALISE

---

This part is soooooo important! Unfortunately, people often believe that by setting their boundary, the job is done, and then they get frustrated with people not respecting those boundaries. Remember – people cannot read your mind! If you don't verbalise and communicate your boundaries, how can people know they exist?

Communicating boundaries can be challenging, especially after years of not doing it. You might wonder if you're capable of doing it effectively. After doing it myself and helping others, I can reassure you that you can! With practice, it gets easier.

The following guideline gives you the know-how to confidently speak up about your boundaries. By following these steps you'll be able to express your needs and limits with confidence and respect, without getting too pushy or passive.

### **DEVELOPING YOUR ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS**

Speaking up confidently is key to making your boundaries crystal clear and strong. It's a healthy and effective way to say what you need while respecting others. It's a great skill that keeps your boundaries intact and your relationships harmonious.

Here are some tools to help you become more assertive when you verbalise your boundaries to another person:

### **USE "I"-STATEMENTS**

"I" statements are a way of expressing your thoughts, feelings, needs, and boundaries by taking ownership of the situation and using the word "I" instead of deflecting into the other person. These statements focus on your own perspective and avoid accusing others.

For example, instead of saying, *"You always make me do too much, and you make me feel overwhelmed,"* you would use an "I" statement: *"I feel overwhelmed when I take on too many tasks, so I need to limit my commitments."*

By using "I" statements, you communicate your feelings and needs without blaming the other person. It leads to a more open and constructive dialogue, making it easier for others to understand your perspective and work together to find solutions that respect everyone's boundaries and well-being.

### **USE CLEAR AND DIRECT LANGUAGE**

Using clear and direct language means getting straight to the point without sugarcoating or using vague expressions. Give yourself time to think about what you'll say ahead of time. This way, you can prevent unnecessary misunderstandings and ensure your message is crystal clear.

Let's look at the examples below, one related to work and the other to intimate relationships. Although the content of the message in both the sugarcoated and direct approaches is the same, the impact and clarity that the direct approach can lead to are by far superior.

**Relationship Scenario:**

**Sugarcoated Approach:** *"I've noticed some small things bothering me, and I was wondering if we could talk about it. Maybe we could find ways to make things a bit better?"*

**Direct Approach:** *"Hey, there are a few things on my mind that I think we need to address. Can we sit down and talk about it tonight? I want us to work together to make things better between us."*

**Work Scenario:**

**Sugarcoated Approach:** *"I've been feeling a bit overwhelmed lately with the workload, and I was wondering if we could maybe talk about finding a better balance between our tasks. What do you think?"*

**Direct Approach:** *"Hey, I've noticed I've been working late a lot. I need to set some boundaries. After 6 PM, I won't be available unless it's urgent. Let's figure out how to manage tasks during regular office hours."*

Being straightforward in your communication might feel uncomfortable initially, but in the long run, it promotes healthy, open, and respectful relationships. It becomes easier with practice.

## **USE YOUR BODY LANGUAGE EFFECTIVELY**

When you communicate your boundaries, make sure to keep your body relaxed, both feet on the ground, and maintain eye contact with the other person. Also, pay attention to the tone of your voice to ensure it conveys the message you want to share.

Remember we spoke about growing your self-awareness with the NUCLEAR FOG? Being aware of body language is just as important. Your body speaks louder than words, so paying attention and using your body right can amp up your message significantly. Also, being aware of the body language of the other person can help you adjust yourself to create a stronger connection. If you are interested in learning more about how to develop your body language, our [90-day training](#) is the ideal place to master it.

## **SAYING "NO" EFFECTIVELY**

Learn to say "no" respectfully but firmly. Express your limitations without apologising excessively or providing lengthy explanations. No is clear, and in most cases there's no need to add anything to it.

## **ACTIVE LISTENING**

How you share your boundaries is within your control, but once you verbalise them, the response is beyond your control. Active listening is a valuable skill that can help you prepare for whatever comes next.

Active listening involves giving your full attention to the other person's words, focusing on both the message and emotions conveyed. This genuine interest in their response demonstrates respect for their viewpoint, which leads to a positive and empathetic environment for assertive communication. Making eye contact, nodding, or asking questions can ease tension and contribute to more productive and respectful conversations, maintaining healthy boundaries in your relationships.



## >>> TAKE ACTION

### **PUT YOUR BOUNDARIES INTO WORDS**

Think about the situation you decided you want to work with and now, imagine expressing your feelings and needs in that scenario using "I" statements. How would you clearly and directly communicate your boundaries? Check any tendency to drop into the sugarcoating approach and modify the message to be more clear and direct.

Consider the body language you'd use and practice saying "no" effectively if relevant. Imagine the conversation where you will share your boundaries and think about how the other person might respond.

What insights or challenges come to you from this mental exercise? Write down your reflections, and we'll build on them in the next step.

## STEP 4 – ENSURE

---

Your boundaries need proactive defence, with established consequences ready for when they're challenged. This preparation can help you avoid surprises and maintain a sense of control. Once you've set your boundaries, make sure you spend some time reflecting on how you want to react when they are being ignored. These consequences can vary, serving as gentle reminders or more significant actions.

For instance, if your colleagues keep disrupting your weekends with work messages even though you said you want your weekend to be work-free, you can set up an automatic reply redirecting them to the workweek.

Or let's look back at the situation where your wife asks for more time together. Let's say that you decide to commit. You leave work early but when you get home, she's unexpectedly unavailable, leaving you feeling disappointed, especially with the demands of your job. This teaches the importance of clear communication and setting expectations. To protect your boundaries in the future, you'll need to set time for a conversation where you will need to express your feelings assertively to emphasise the need for mutual respect and commitment to shared plans for a stronger connection in your marriage.

## >>> TAKE ACTION

### **STRENGTHEN YOUR BOUNDARIES**

Picture the person in your scenario testing your boundary.

What's the worst that could happen? Use what you know about the character and traits of the other person to help you prepare for what might come up.

What can you do to make sure your boundary is communicated in the clearest way possible?

What can you do to make sure your boundary stays strong?

Craft the approach you'll use to protect your boundaries. Think about protecting your boundary in a way that would lead to understanding instead of more confrontation. If your communication of the boundary wasn't clear, take ownership of it and spend time communicating it more clearly.

Write your thoughts and the adjustments you might need to make, and use this exercise to prepare yourself in the best possible way to defend your boundaries and keep them intact.

## STEP 5 – REEVALUATE

---

As we mentioned before, life isn't always predictable, so it's important to evaluate your boundaries regularly and check if you still need them.

Setting and maintaining boundaries requires time and energy and hanging on to a boundary which is no longer needed can sometimes do more harm than good.

A few years ago I coached a work colleague who I knew very well. When we first started, coaching was an alien concept to him, and he mixed it up with therapy. He felt a cloud of shame around our sessions, and he made it very clear that no one in our shared circles should know about them. I totally respected that. Although I didn't relate to his concern it seemed like a good and necessary boundary for him to feel safe to explore.

Fast forward a few weeks, everything changed. As he started seeing the positive impact of our sessions, he became totally open to sharing it with others. The boundary that was once his safety net became irrelevant, and he fully embraced the openness. By letting it go, he not only freed himself but also became a passionate advocate for our work, and decided to change his career and become a psychotherapist.

Remember, keeping your boundaries aligned with your current situation will help you save time and energy. So, be mindful of the NUCLEAR FOG signs from section one to identify any areas where you might need to establish new boundaries and drop any boundaries that no longer serve you. It's similar to when you go to the gym and establish a routine to follow. You won't stick with it forever. After 30 days or so, you'd check if it's still needed and what needs to change. Do the same with your boundaries.

Following these steps will help you navigate your relationships with clear and relevant boundaries, and as a result you'll experience more clarity, confidence and courage to live your life the way you want.

**>>> TAKE ACTION**



**REEVALUATE YOUR BOUNDARIES**

Check in regularly.

Have my needs or circumstances changed?

Are the boundaries I have in place still needed?

If YES- keep them, but check if any alterations need to be made.

If NO - drop them.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Great job completing the guidebook on boundaries! If you're curious to dive deeper into personal development and growth, you have these options to fit your curiosity and commitment level.

Option #1	Option #2
<< <b>90-DAY ONLINE TRAINING</b> >>	<< <b>FULL WEEKEND WORKSHOP</b> >>
<b>The Man You Want to Be</b>	<b>Your Core Quest</b>
Join a 90-day training program for driven men seeking growth in relationships, leadership, and purpose. Develop the clarity, confidence, and courage required to lead a more meaningful, joyful, and fulfilling life.	Connect with other like-minded men in an interactive full weekend workshop where you'll gain clarity about who you are and your purpose, vision and mission in life.
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>To learn more and submit your application</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#"><b>click here</b></a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>To learn more and submit your application</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#"><b>click here</b></a></p>
<p><i>"This week has seen a massive unexpected challenge in business. I have faced it positively and calmly. Prior to the training I would have felt very negative, angry, confused and bitter. I now see it as an opportunity. The work we did in the group has been life changing"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ed Neal</b></p>	<p><i>"The workshop definitely counts as one of the most impactful things I have ever done. It was a quantum jump into a potential future self. A unique experience where I got the chance to tap into my essence and get a sense of who I'm destined to be or become.."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Andreas Karmilikis</b></p>

And if you don't feel ready to do the training or the weekend, try our six-step email process to uncover your core values at your own pace.

To start your process send an email with the title **VALUES** to [yaron@onbeingmen.com](mailto:yaron@onbeingmen.com) and I'll get back to you with the first step and all the instructions you need.

---

*Lead with your heart and let the head follow  
instead of leading with the head  
living life of regret in your heart*

---



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---



**Yaron Engler**

Despite the advice to choose a 'real' job, I decided to pursue a career as a drummer and toured globally with exciting productions. In my mid-30s, I lost my mojo for touring life and found a new calling in working with men. On that path I lived in four countries, battled years of depression, and navigated the challenges of fatherhood, almost facing divorce after the second child but ultimately transforming my relationship into a more mature, loving, open, and honest one.

I'm passionate about helping men set boundaries, break free from obstacles, and empower them to live authentically because I know what it feels like to be stuck and lost in feelings of inadequacy, depression, relationship challenges, and societal pressure. And with over 25 years of self-discovery journey, I also know that there's a way out, and it's more rewarding when we open up, share, and do the work together.

This journey is ongoing, and I don't claim to have it all figured out. I keep learning, growing, and confronting new challenges and on that path I've

been accumulating powerful tools that I share with the men at the [On Being Men](#) community.

So I want to thank you for reading this guidebook and investing in yourself. If you seek more support, feel free to get in touch.

Yaron

## >>> TAKE ACTION



### **TWO LAST QUESTIONS:**

- What is the biggest insight you've taken from this guidebook?
- What, in your opinion, would make this guidebook better?

At On Being Men, we are fully committed to improving our work, and the best way to do it is by getting feedback from the men who go through the activities we create. I'd love to hear your thoughts so if you want to share your answers, please send them over to [aron@onbeingmen.com](mailto:aron@onbeingmen.com)