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How to Stand Up for Yourself and Get What You Deserve



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Learning how to stand up for yourself is a key to boosting your confidence

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For most of us, it's pretty easy to stand up for someone else. It's not hard to say your friend deserves a raise at work or your mom should ask for a second opinion at the doctor. But for some reason, when the tables are turned, we have all kinds of painful stories about how it's selfish, rude or unkind to advocate for our own needs.

When these types of stories are running the show, it's easy to fall into the trap of [dismissing your own needs](#), ignoring your own desires and forgetting that [quiet strength within you](#)—the voice that says, “Hey, I matter too.”

But when you make a habit of doing this, it not only degrades your sense of self-worth, but it also makes you vulnerable to people who are looking to take advantage of you.

So how do you go from being everyone else's advocate to learning how to stand up for yourself and fostering confidence? These are the steps I've shared with my personal development clients as a coach for the past 16 years.

How to stand up for yourself: A step-by-step guide

1. Strengthen your self-worth

To build self-worth, you actually have to keep more value than you give away. Let me explain. Where financial worth is about keeping more money than you spend, self-worth is built in the same way, but instead of dollars, we're collecting and keeping more self.

This idea of self can be earned, spent or invested. It can be used as a type of currency, and its value is determined by supply and demand. To raise your self-worth, you have to claim, own and possess more of yourself, which means that you can never build self-worth by giving yourself away to people or things you don't enjoy.

2. Define your boundaries



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In order to [strengthen boundaries](#), first it's important to understand what they are—and aren't. The definition of a boundary is a line that marks the limits of an area; it's both a line of containment (keeping you in) and a line of protection (keeping others out).

Think about this like drawing a circle around yourself. Inside the circle is your mental, emotional, physical and spiritual space. This space is where you live. It is the space that your whole self occupies. It includes all the aspects of yourself that you love, cherish and celebrate. It also includes all the aspects of yourself that you have forgotten, denied and repressed. No one else belongs in that circle, and it can't be shared.

Boundaries are not complaints, threats or ultimatums. They are not manipulative, mean, cruel or rude. Boundaries are guidelines—tangible or intangible limits—that help to clearly define what needs to be protected. They are your

rules for who, what, how and why you feel comfortable being close to someone else, helping others know who you are and how to interact with you. When you are clear with your boundaries, no one around you is left guessing.

Self-worthiness is built on a foundation of healthy boundaries, because healthy boundaries start with honoring, respecting and caring for yourself. It means that you clearly define what is sustainable for you in order to stop your resources from becoming depleted.

3. Get comfortable saying no

The next time someone asks you for a favor or to join a committee, consider if you can *afford* to say yes. What I mean by this is, think about what this “yes” will cost you in terms of finances, energy, health and time. Do you have an excess or an overflow of these resources that you can give after you’ve already cared for yourself? Do you have extra money on top of what you need? Do you have extra energy on top of what you need?

If it’s a “no,” either because you can’t afford to say yes or because you simply don’t want to, the best phrase to use is [“No, thank you.”](#) You could also try something like “That doesn’t work for me” or “That doesn’t feel good to me” or “That doesn’t work with my schedule” or “That’s not my priority right now.” But know that “No,” on its own, is a complete sentence.

4. Stop people-pleasing



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It’s easy to fall into the people-pleasing trap because you tend to get praised for this habit. People-pleasing pleases people. But—and this is a big but—the effects of this compulsion over a long period of time can be devastating to your sense of self-worth.

When you place more importance on how you appear and what others think of you, by definition, you are devaluing yourself. As your self-worth plummets, your compulsion to please others rises and you end up in a desperate cycle of performing for others and hoping to gain worth. This never works, and you end up exhausting your resources until you’re a burned-out, resentful shell of yourself.

People-pleasing is often motivated by fear—fear of not being liked, fear of rejection, fear of not belonging. To [break this habit](#), instead of relying on niceness and agreeableness, start leaning toward courage and inner strength. Lean toward the courage to not be liked all the time, the resilience to endure rejection and the strength to take risks. Start valuing [courage](#) in yourself and others, and try to take small steps of courage in your relationships.

5. Ask for what you want

We often fall into the habit of automatically reacting to others' requests without pausing to consider our own desires. To get comfortable with standing up for yourself, you need to change this instinct. Instead of reacting to others, determine what *you* want first. Then communicate your request.

It's difficult to figure out what you want ... and it's supposed to be difficult. But the more time you spend getting clear on your own desires, the easier it is to ask for and defend what you need.

Your wants and desires are the mysterious forces that lead you into life's unknown frontier. To speak your desires, to yourself or to others, is to give voice to your place in the world. Your desires are your way forward. They point to the horizon and give shape to your journey. They give you direction and lead you deeper into a life of meaning, purpose and substance.

This is how life unfolds and expands around you. This is how you experience the limitless possibilities of what wants to be lived through you. Your desires deserve attention, energy and respect. Stand up for them—and yourself.

Meadow DeVor is the author of [The Worthy Mind: Transform Your Mindset, Strengthen Self-Worth](#) and has been a personal development coach, self-help author and self-worth teacher since 2007.

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