

Episode 167 Transcript : Boundaries

Karen Brown:

Hi, everyone. Welcome to Episode 167. Can you believe we've done 167 of these? Today, we are going to talk about a real life renovation that is something that affects all of us, at one point or another, throughout our lives, boundaries. It's a really important thing to think about and to talk about and to be proactive about in your own life as we come out of what has been a really traumatic couple of years for a lot of people and our lives looked very different.

Karen Brown:

Now, as we start to get it back to some form of normal, it's a good time to think about how you want to reset your life. No doubt you've encountered people throughout your life that take a lot of energy from you. They're full of drama. They always have a problem that needs to be solved. They want to involve you in their life, in every aspect of their life, projects that they want you to be involved with to the detriment of time that you wish to spend on your own projects, with your own family, taking care of your own life. This is not to say you don't want to be involved with them or friends with them you just don't want all of your time sucked up by them. How to deal with it can sometimes be a problem.

Karen Brown:

Sometimes they're family members that cause trouble. They're misogynistic, they are abusive, and you feel you have to keep dealing with them because they are family or because other family members keep involving you because they don't know the story. Hint, you don't have to be involved with them, and you don't owe anybody an explanation about why you don't want to be involved with them. Patterns about how you deal with other people tend to be established pretty early on in life. Remember those group projects in school? I always hated group projects myself. I hated them when I was involved with them. I hated them when my children were involved with them. I understand why it is easier for teachers to deal with group projects. It's not necessarily the better thing for the people involved in the projects. And you know what I'm saying. There's always someone who doesn't pull their own weight. The other people, wanting a good grade, pick up the slack, and do their work for them. And yet at the end, everybody gets the same grade. It's never fair. It never felt fair. Nobody has ever come up with a better system. Well, I tried, but the teachers weren't buying it.

Karen Brown:

Anyway in earlier life, even earlier than school, were you the child who always deferred to another child? Maybe it was a sibling, maybe it was a friend, a cousin, who knows? That child undalways wanted the toy you had or they wanted more than their share of the treats, so you deferred, and let them have their way. As you grow up that pattern tends to continue. There's really good news about this though. It doesn't have to continue. You get to make the choice about how you live your life. That's the kicker, you have to choose.

Karen Brown:

As we ease out of this life and reset our boundaries, let's just think about this. Let's think about how you want the boundaries to be reset. And it's not easy. I've had to set some very firm boundaries over my lifetime, sometimes with family. Yeah, it's not easy. And sometimes with friends. Surprisingly, the easier ones to deal with are the people who are the bullies, because they will push and push and push and they will do what bullies always do. They will blow up and then they will go away. May be a bit sad when people take the choice to leave your life. But really you don't need a bully in your life. And bullies will do what bullies will do. Like I said, they will push you until they can't push you anymore. They will have a temper tantrum and then they will go away. Easy.

Karen Brown:

The more difficult ones are the people who you really want to have stay in your life, but you want to set boundaries around how they will treat you. So let me be clear. I'm not talking about cutting people out of your life. It's not a black and white situation. I'm talking about setting boundaries, teaching people how to be your friend, what you will and won't accept. Now, here's a for instance. You've got a friend, we've all got this friend, who always has a problem. Always, always and forever, has a problem. And they talk with you about it and you offer solutions and guidance. They never really take any action on it and it just carries on and on for weeks, for months, sometimes for years. Do you get the picture that maybe what they really want is not to solve the problem, but to keep the drama of the problem in their lives? To keep getting sympathy from people? To keep getting attention from people? "Oh, poor me. Oh, poor me."

Karen Brown:

They do have an issue, for sure, but making it your issue doesn't do your mental health any better. So here's what you can do. You can still be friends with such people. You can still involve them in your conversations, in your life. But when that topic comes up, the one that always comes up, you just stop the conversation and say, "Listen, we've had this conversation umpteen times before. I've given you my advice. You don't seem to take the advice and it really hurts me to see you in such distress and know that I can't help. So maybe you need advice from a different friend, maybe you even need professional guidance, but until that happens and you choose to take a step forward, I really don't feel like I can be helpful. So let's talk about something else until you make that choice."

Karen Brown:

And if they push back then and say, "Yes, but." You say, "There's no but. There's no but about this. We've been over this many times and as I've told you, this is hurting me that I can't help you, because I do care about you. So I need you to take some steps forward in solving this problem so that I can perhaps be helpful on the next leg of this journey. But until then, let's carry on." Now you may have to repeat this several times and start new topics several times, but they will get the message. They will see the boundary. You just have to stay firm in what your boundary is. Now, you can make sure that you are not alone with the person. You can involve other people in your group. In effect what you're doing is diluting your family or could be family or friend group with more people. You dilute their effect. But at the same time, you get to build new and better relationships with more people that work.

Karen Brown:

It worked for me. And I hope that it would work for you. The word no is a very powerful word. And surprisingly, it's a complete sentence. So it's a very important word to have in your vocabulary. Very important to set these kinds of boundaries. If you're not comfortable right off the bat, and somebody is asking you to do something, go somewhere, complete a task, participate in a committee, whatever it happens to be, and you don't feel comfortable saying no right off the bat right off the bat, just don't say yes. Train yourself to not say yes. What you can do instead is say, "Hmm, let me think about that and check my calendar and I'll get back to you." If they push you, just repeat that you will get back to them. Maybe what you need is time to sleep on it. Maybe what you need is time who reflect on your other commitments, the relationships you have with other family, other friends, the stuff you've got going on in your life. And if you take the time to participate in what you're being asked to do by your friend, then you might not have the time to spend on the other stuff that's important to you. And you might actually come to resent the task that you are taking on anyway, and you don't want to do that.

Karen Brown:

So it gives you time to consider and come up with a viable response and you can call them or you can email them and say, "I've got so much stuff going on right now that I just don't have the time to do this. But if I ever do free up some time, I'll circle back to you." And if they come at you again, you repeat that. "I don't have the time right now, but if I become able to have some time to

devote to you and your cause or your task or the committee, then I will get back to you." That's a really viable answer and they can't really argue with that. They can push you, but no is a complete sentence. Not right now.

Karen Brown:

So before we switch gears, I want to tell you something that I wrapped my head around that has been super, super helpful to me in personal and in business. Oftentimes people will want something done because it's part of their process. There's a committee and there are 10 jobs and they give these jobs out to various people or they want to give them out to various people. What I have found is that when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. That has been a very important concept in my life. Was that a quote from Maya Angelou? Perhaps. However, very important. If nobody steps forward to take on a particular task, and the task can be giving advice to someone, if nobody wants to do that, it may not be worth doing.

Karen Brown:

Think of it in terms of a project that a friend has and they want you to participate. If nobody steps forward to help with that project, that project may not be the thing right now. It may not be the thing that provides a win-win for everybody. And being able to wrap your head around the fact that maybe something just shouldn't be done is such a mindblower. I think you can really wrap your head around that and it changes the way you look at what the tasks are. Am I doing this for them? Am I doing it for myself? Am I doing it because it feels like a good thing for the community or for my church or for the organization that I belong to? If it is not a win-win, then maybe it just doesn't need to be done right now or in the configuration that it was presented to you in. Make sense?

Karen Brown:

Last but not least, there are people in your life who have been or are abusive. This is a really important thing to look back on and decide how you're going to handle it. You don't owe an explanation to anyone about why you choose not to participate in that person's life or have them participate in your life. If you choose to, that's fine, but people need to understand that respecting your needs, your wishes, is important. That's another boundary, okay?

Karen Brown:

Setting boundaries is a real life reno that is so important for you, for your mental health, for your wellbeing, and for your ability to live your life in a way that makes you happy. We only have so many years on this earth, in this life anyway, depending on your beliefs. And it is really important to wrap your head around those real life renovations that will make you your life a better place to be.

Karen Brown:

Join us next week for another episode. That will be episode 168. I can't believe it, I can't believe it. Anyway, if you have any comments or questions, leave them below and we will address them. Thanks everybody. Have a great day. Bye.