

[00:00:00] <music>

Intro: Hey friends! Welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I am so happy that you're here. Each week I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women.

We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life, and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends. And I cannot wait to get started.

So I am super, super excited about today's episode. Today we're talking about boundaries: how to set them, how to keep them, and why they are so truly life-changing. Now, if you've been a Girls Night listener for a while now, this is not the first time you're hearing me talk about boundaries. We actually had an episode a few weeks ago, where we talked about people-pleasing, which is similar but not exactly the same.

We're talking about this because this has been a huge lesson for me. I am historically bad at knowing what I want and what I need, at drawing lines and saying no. And for the longest time, I was pretty okay with that. Maybe even a little bit proud of it.

I like being helpful. I like being needed. I like feeling useful and capable and strong. And for years, I thought that this was the best way to love the people that I love, to always put their needs above my needs, to say yes to everything, to give but never take, to have everything that's mine be there without limit, whether it was my stuff, my space, my time or my energy.

This is what I thought would lead to the healthiest closest relationships. But over the last few years, I've learned that the opposite is true. Boundaries are an absolutely essential part of healthy relationships. They're an essential part of a healthy life, of a healthy us. And that's why we're talking about this here today.

To help us through this, I invited my dear friend Dr. Sasha Shillcutt back on the show. Sasha is a renowned cardiac anesthesiologist, professor, bestselling author, and CEO and founder of Brave Enough, who's walked through seasons of loneliness, anxiety, and complete burnout. Needless to say she's had to learn about boundaries the hard way.

She has a new book out called *Brave Boundaries: Strategies to Say No, Stand Strong, and Take Control of Your Time*, where she helps us find the courage to

implement boundaries in our own life. Here are just a few of the things that she's going to teach us on this episode.

She'll teach us how to take a personal boundary inventory and identify what boundaries we need. She'll teach us why saying no to others and yes for ourselves isn't selfish, and can actually help us be a better version of ourselves and love our people better. She'll teach us how to kindly respond to someone if we receive backlash for the boundary we've set. And that's seriously just the beginning.

One of my favorite things that Sasha said in this episode was, "the world will set your boundaries if you don't set them for yourself." And that couldn't be more true. Friends, if you're feeling anxious, burned out, or overwhelmed in life right now, this episode is for you.

But before we dive in, I have a resource I wanted to make sure to share with you. And it's called *The Between Places: 100 Days to Trusting God When You Don't Know What's Next*. And here's the thing. We all find ourselves in-between places throughout our lives, especially these days.

Maybe you're waiting for something, longing for something, or working for something, but it just hasn't happened yet. Maybe you know where you want to go, but you have no clue how to get there. Or maybe you know you're not where you want to be in life, but you don't know what exactly needs to change or how to change it, and you don't know how to figure any of that out.

Maybe you're trying to make a big decision and you have no idea which option to choose. Or maybe you're feeling like the whole world has turned upside down in the last few years, taking your life and your plans and any sense of security right along with it. And in all of it, you're trying to trust God with the future, but you're just not sure how to practically do that, and how to quiet the fear and anxiety, all this uncertainty it has brought up in your heart. That's what *The Between Places* is here for.

Through 100 guided prayer prompts, *The Between Places* will help you trust God with the trickiest, most uncertain, and most important parts of your life. It'll help you believe more fully than ever that God is good, that He loves you, and that He's taking care of you. It'll help you live today with more contentment, step into the future with more courage and faith and rest in God's peace knowing that He's with you every step of the way.

To pick up a copy of *The Between Places*, my newest prayer journal, just head to my website. It's stephaniemaywilson.com. Again, that's stephaniemaywilson.com. And that link will also be in our show notes.

Okay, you guys ready? Without any further ado, here's my conversation with Sasha.

[00:04:20] <music>

Stephanie: All right, friends, I am so excited for who we are inviting back on the show today. I'm sitting here with my friend Dr. Sasha Shillcutt. Thank you so much for being back on the show.

Dr. Sasha: Oh, I'm so excited. I love talking to you. It's like just chatting for an hour or 30 minutes with a friend and I just love catching up and seeing your beautiful face, not just on Instagram but in real life.

Stephanie: In real life. In real life. I love getting to talk to you. You know, we were just talking about all that's happened since the last time we talked. I love what you do and I love the example that you're setting for so many of us and for me in particular. So I'm really just glad to have another chance to talk.

Dr. Sasha: Well, thank you for having me on. I'm excited to be here.

Stephanie: So, for women who haven't gotten to meet you yet... And by the way, you've been on the show before, but we're going to link to that in the show notes so women can go back and listen. But for women who haven't gotten to meet you yet, can you tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact about yourself?

Dr. Sasha: So I am a physician. I'm a cardiac anesthesiologist and professor at the University of Nebraska. I take care of patients undergoing critical heart surgery.

In about 2013, I burned out. I was a mom of four young children, had a busy career, and wanted to quit all the things because I felt like I was failing at my job and as a mom, and as a wife, quite frankly. So I kind of took a year to save what was left of my life, thank the Lord. And through that, I realized that I couldn't be the only woman who had a career and was trying to raise a family and feeling this way.

So I started a community that grew to thousands and thousands of women, and I wrote a book. I have a podcast. I lead events for women, mostly women physicians, but now it's really grown to be all women because it really doesn't matter what you do in life. You probably are struggling with similar things that I have struggled with.

I love leading my company, Brave Enough. I love just encouraging women to be authentic and go through whatever they're going through at each stage of life by

reaching out to other women and having that network and going through life together.

A fun fact about myself is most people don't realize that I don't watch television and I have zero information on pop culture, something my kids tease me about all the time because they're always talking about somebody, some musician or some new show, and I just smile and nod, like in the operating room when people talk about it like I know what they're talking about.

Probably the last show I watched like routinely on television was *Little House on the Prairie*. I'm clueless.

Stephanie: Oh, my... So I want to know. Like you get home from work at the end of the day, your kids go to bed, how do you unwind at night?

Dr. Sasha: I love to read. So I'm a huge reader and I read a lot. But I think it's like from my childhood, honestly, because my husband loves television shows and Netflix. We have all the stuff, right? But when I was growing up, we just didn't have a tel... we never had cable or anything. We had like three channels. And we just never watched television and the television was really never on in our house.

So even if the television is on in my house, it's like a sound that's like a baseline annoyance for me. But I'm the only person in my family that feels this way. So I have to have major boundaries. I am the outlier, for sure. But what it has led to is I am clueless. People are like, "Oh my gosh, this celebrity couple broke up," and I'm like, "Who is that?" I honestly don't know. It's just funny. It's something that people tease me about all the time.

Stephanie: I love that. I absolutely love that. That's amazing. So, speaking of boundaries, you mentioned briefly you have a new book coming out. I have a copy of it here. But it's called *Brave Boundaries: Strategies to Say No, Stand Strong, and Take Control of Your Time*.

Boundaries has, I would say over the last four years, become this really, really important word for me, because I think for a really long time I didn't have any, and I didn't know that I could and I didn't know that I should. And then I didn't realize that for the longest time that that's why parts of myself were getting kind of pulled away without me giving them away, you know? Like I just felt depleted a lot and frustrated and kind of resentful.

So boundaries have just been this like really empowering thing for me. So I'm so glad that you're at this book and I just want to pick your brain on all things boundaries. Because especially with all that you have going on in life, I know that

you have to have some really... you have to decide what doesn't get to come in in order to make room for the things that do. So tell me about the book. Tell me how this idea came about and what this has looked like in your life.

Dr. Sasha: The book is something that I'm super passionate about. I wish I could give it to every single woman on the planet because I'm this very high functioning, you know, person who basically I should know this. Like you can't really get more educated than what I have learned in my life and yet I did not know, like you, that boundaries were this important. No one taught me about boundaries.

I didn't even know what boundaries I needed to have in my life. I thought boundaries were like something that you should talk about if you're going through a divorce or something. You know, like with a psychiatrist or psychologist. I was that clueless about how important it is to have and know your boundaries.

So I'm really passionate about this because basically if you are, and I don't know any woman who's not, if you are a caregiver, or you are someone who takes care of people, whether that is your spouse, your kids, your family, your patients, your clients, you're a teacher, if you are a woman who actually cares about other people, boundaries are the most important thing that allow you to live your priorities.

And it was so mind-blowing to me until I learned this, honestly, through therapy when I was in the mi... start of the pandemic. And then beginning of the pandemic, here I am, a physician, I'm a mom, I'm all of a sudden juggling school at home and working with COVID patients and running this huge community where I'm serving other women physicians who are in the trenches.

And I just felt like every day the exact description of what you described, Stephanie, like just pieces of me being pulled away. But at the same time, shame. Shame that I couldn't help more. Shame that my kids were getting a C in this class because I wasn't at home helping them because I was in the operating room and I couldn't explain how to do third-grade math. All these things like shame, but at the same time like less and less of me, less of my energy, less of my time.

And I actually was so afraid of even opening my phone every day, because in my phone would be a message that "we need you to do this," or "you didn't do this," or "you missed this," or "you've got to do this," that I just had such low self-esteem and shame and I wanted to quit all the things.

And I thought, "Here I am, this person who's written about burnout, I wrote this whole book about it, how to help women, I've led conferences on this. I'm supposed to be the expert and I am back in the same situation I was in 2013. How did this happen? How did I let this happen? Why did I let this happen?"

So I went to a therapist for the first time in years and years, and she said, "You have no boundaries?" And I was like, "What are you talking about? I don't even know what that is." I mean, I have like three degrees and I don't know what the word "boundary" is or how to put it in my life.

And she taught me about this, and I recognized this is the problem. Like I am not put on this earth to help all people. That's actually not my purpose in life. And that just feeds my ego and makes me a martyr and then just leads to burnout.

I had to recognize areas of my life... What boundaries taught me was I have a list of priorities and how I want to live. We all do. Maybe they just live in our head, but we all have these priorities. If you're not living your priorities, it's because you don't have boundaries. It's the only way to protect the way that we want to live our priorities, what we truly think our priorities are. And that's why I wrote the book, and I'm so passionate about it. And I'm so excited, I get to talk to you about it today.

Stephanie: I love that so much. I mean, that's so echoes the things that I learned in counseling also, you know, kind of starting in 2018. And I just remember being like, "This is... I had... What? Of course, yes. Okay, this makes so much sense."

I guess I just didn't know this was allowed. I also didn't know that this is something that like kind, loving, nice, helpful people could do. And it turns out they can and they should, they really need to, but I just didn't know that.

But getting to figure out like what my boundaries are and starting to keep them hasn't really helped so much in being able to live life the way that I want to live, keep the things that are most important, and love people better. Give us some examples of what boundaries are because I think there's still a bunch of us who are like, "Uh... I don't know."

Dr. Sasha: Boundaries are really how we show up for people transparent and kind in our world, whether that's our working world or our home life. And they teach people what our priorities are and how to treat us. And if we don't know what our own boundaries are, because the most difficult boundaries I would say and the most important ones are to set with yourself, someone else will set them for you. The world will set your boundaries if you don't set them for yourself.

And so it could be something as simple as a morning routine that's a boundary for you. Or it can be something like work email or work texts and phone calls coming in at a certain time. And what it does is it puts the responsibility on you and empowers you to set your boundaries for other people. Instead of expecting people

to read your mind or know that you've had a really hard day or know that, you know, on Tuesday night you might be at home watching Netflix, and someone calls you with a work question, and you're like, "Well, I'm at home. I'm in my pajamas. I can answer the call."

Even though you're not at work, you answer the call. But then the next Tuesday, you're in the middle of getting your daughter ready for a dance recital and the same person calls you. And now you're mad. You're mad at that person. You're angry. You're frustrated. You might even treat them a little rudely the next time you see them, or you might just be like, "Oh, they don't respect my boundaries." But you've not set the boundary.

So a kind and clear thing would be to not answer the phone the week before and just message, "Hey, is it emergency?" 99% of the time it's no. "I'll check in with you tomorrow." That's a boundary. And that allows us to live our priorities in a way that is kind to other people and sets up a respectful fence around what our priorities are.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. And really you're mad at that person, which we've all been there for a million different reasons, we're mad at that person but we haven't set them up for success. We've actually set them up for failure. And that's unfair.

I know that something you talk about in the book is like taking a personal boundary inventory. So talk us through like how to figure out where we might need some boundaries in our life first.

Dr. Sasha: So one of the things that I do in the book is I teach you how to take a boundary inventory of your life. And I always say, start with your pain point, your biggest pain point. We all have pain points. Maybe it's your bedtime. Maybe it's a project or a person at work. Maybe it's negative self-talk, you know. Maybe it's health and wellness and just trying to balance time for yourself as a busy working mom, or whatever it is.

Whatever your biggest pain point is in life, maybe it's a family member, you probably lack boundaries around it. I would bet you 99% of the time it's a boundary issue.

So always start with your biggest pain point, and just sit there and go, "Okay, what boundaries do I have around this person or project or issue in my life?" "Hmm, I have none. I'm accessible to this person 24/7 or I think about this 24/7 or they can call me or access me 24/7."

Where is the fear coming from around the boundary? And many times it's a self-confidence thing, or it's a learned behavior that we as women actually don't think we deserve boundaries because we want to be liked or we've had it modeled for us in our maternal figure in childhood that a good woman or a good mom or good doctor or (fill in the blank) doesn't have that. It always helps, always helpful, always shows up.

If your belief system has the word "always" in it, you know, that's just leading to death. Like you're on the pathway to death. I mean, I'm being very frank and dramatic here, but it's true. So if you always think you're going to show up for your family, or you're always going to be there for your partner, or you're always going to show up and do your job perfectly, you're setting yourself up for failure and burnout.

So the biggest thing to think about is, why am I afraid to set a boundary? Because most of the time it's an internal fear. We fear letting someone down. We fear disappointing nice people. We fear being seen as weak or that we need help.

And we just can't seem to get over that fear. And it's almost always in our brain, something that we have believed about ourselves that we think, "Oh, if I tell Stephanie I can't show up for coffee today because I've been up for 24 hours with a sick kid, she's going to be really mad at me and she's not going to want to be my friend. She's never going to ask me for coffee again." Like we start this whole narrative.

Or if I tell my husband, I don't want to go this weekend on this thing that he's planned, I just need to stay home and take care of myself, he's going to be totally disappointed in me. He's going to be angry, or he's going to whatever.

Like we just make these narratives, when in reality 99% of the time the person gets it. They're like, "I totally understand. I get it. I won't call you at night anymore about work issues." People understand. And you become a boundary person that makes them feel safe enough to share their boundaries with you. But it's really important that we actually start with that boundary inventory.

Stephanie: I love that. You know, the thing about calling late at night... We want to take care of each other. Like that's the point of this is we want to take care of each other, we want to treat each other well, we want to honor each other.

And I also think that we're afraid of being a burden a lot of times. But that person who's calling at nine o'clock at night on a Tuesday, if that were me, I would need help clearly because I'm trying to call you. But I'm also worried about being a burden and I also want to take care of you, I want to honor you.

If you tell me, "Hey, nine o'clock at night on a Tuesday is not a great time to call me, but you can call me, you know, between this time and this time these days of the week," then that tells me how to take care of you, and how to reach out to you without being a burden. And I love that as the recipient of that.

You said this earlier and I wanted to just bring it back. Like telling people how to treat you... I think when we don't take the time to decide how we want to be treated, then we can't tell anybody else. We just assume other people know and then we're mad at them when they don't know. But people can't read our minds.

Dr. Sasha: They don't. They don't know your mind and they don't know your stress level or what's been going on in your life.

Stephanie: I remember this in school all the time. I would be so frustrated by this. I mean, this is mostly high school. But you know, you have back to back to back classes all day long and your teacher first period gives you homework, then your teacher second period gives you a lot of homework, having no idea how much homework teacher one gave you.

And that goes on all day long, until it's just stacking and stacking and stacking. It feels like your boundaries are being kind of infringed upon because you're being asked maybe more than you can give. But those teachers don't have a responsibility to talk to each other and be like, "Well, how much homework did you assign?"

But that's really how it is in life. It's like, well, you know, your patients haven't checked in with your kids to see if they need you today. That's not their job. It's your job to say, "Hey, my kids are more important than my patients" or "this patient is, for you, it really is a life and death thing." And so you're like, "This is an actual emergency. My kid just needs some help with homework. He can wait, this patient literally cannot." But that's your job to kind of voice.

Dr. Sasha: Yeah. I mean, perfect example of my day yesterday. I was at the hospital all day and the emails just kept coming. And instead of following a boundary where I just didn't read them, I was reading emails throughout the day. And all it did was increase my anxiety level and increase my like, "I've got to answer this email. I've got to answer this email. Oh, my gosh."

So I get home around 5:30 and now it's dinnertime, I haven't seen my family all day, and instead of engaging with my family, I'm thinking about my inbox, right? I'm thinking about the questions and the answers. I'm not on my phone, but they have basically taken over my brain.

And I had to excuse myself from dinner, go to the bathroom, sit there for 30 seconds and breathe and tell myself like, "None of those emails are emergencies. I broke a boundary today and read them, which I normally don't do. I try really hard to just... I have times out of the week that I do my inbox.

My kids are visibly in front of me right now for an hour. I'm going to get up out of this bathroom, go back to the dinner table and not even... I'm going to put a boundary in my head around my inbox. I'm not going to think about it. I'm not going to talk about it. I'm going to engage with my kids. And in two hours, if I still think that I have to do that, I will engage."

Well, guess what happened? I was snapped right back into the moment and into my kids. And I was like, "None of those emails are emergencies. They can all wait for my normal time that I answer them during the week. And I'm just going to engage and be with my kids." So that is a boundary. And I think sometimes we don't realize that boundaries with ourselves are like this first set of boundaries that we have to set.

Stephanie: What are some other boundaries that you have for yourself or that we can have for ourselves? Because I don't know if that's really something that I've... I can think of some but I want to know more about this.

Dr. Sasha: So my strongest boundary that I have that is probably the number one boundary is I have to spend 30 minutes alone a day. It's the hardest one. It's the most challenging. And I know this because I coach women and I teach classes to women that are busy moms and have careers. When I tell them they have to spend 30 minutes a day by themselves, they look at me like I have seven heads. Like, "Where's that going to come from?"

So when I wake up in the morning, my first thought of my brain always goes to my to-do list. Like, "Oh my gosh, what do I have to do today? I'll do this, this, and this. I better get going." But I have a boundary. I have a super strong boundary with myself that I do not start the day working. I don't start the day on my phone. I don't start the day in my inbox. I get up, I go for a walk, and I spend time with God every day.

There are 700 things that I could do in those 30 minutes that I honestly every day wake up... It's like I've been doing this now for years, Stephanie, and I still wake up thinking, "I should start the 700 thing." But if I didn't have a boundary with myself, like, "That is not how you start your day, Sasha. You get up and you walk," I wouldn't do it.

So that is a very simple boundary that has saved my life. It has literally saved my life because it helps me when on my walk I think about my anxiety, I think about what are my worries, what have I been stressing about, what have I been worrying about that I shouldn't, what do I need to say no to this week. So that's a very just simple boundary.

The other boundary that I have that I think is really important is your phone quite frankly. I think we all have boundaries because our phone is how work comes to us. Nobody knocks on our door and tells us to do a task. That's not how work comes to you. Whatever you do in your vocation, it comes through your phone.

And if you don't have clear boundaries around when you engage on your phone, you will do work even if it's in your head, like my example at dinner last night, 24/7. You will have no boundaries. And if you work from home, it's even more important that you're like, "Closing the book of business right now, engaging in my life outside of work." I talk about this in the book, How to set your personal boundaries with your phone.

[00:26:37] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! I'm so excited to get to tell you about today's sponsor. This is a company I've loved for years and I'm honored to get to partner with them. Our sponsor for today is an amazing app called [Calm](#).

Calm is the number one mental wellness app with tools to reduce anxiety, improve focus, and help you quiet your thoughts so you can drift off to sleep. I came across Calm a few years ago. It was the middle of the night and my mind was racing. Anyone else experienced this?

I saw that they have these things called sleep stories and I figured I'd give one a try, and I fell in love. Honestly, I've never looked back. Friends when I tell you that Calm was a mainstay in my life, that is truly an understatement. I listen to their sleep stories almost every single night.

Side note, my favorites are always travel-related. These days I'm drifting off to sleep thinking about wandering through the streets of Dublin or trekking across Spain.

With two toddlers running around my house also tends to be a bit noisy these days. And so when I need some peace and quiet in the middle of the chaos or when I need to get some work done, I listen to Calm's soundscapes. They're like white noise, but better.

My favorite is called Rain on window and they also have this one that sounds like you're in a museum. It's like a little bit of noise but not too much. It's great for workday.

Calm has been this incredible tool for me in the past few years, helping me fall asleep at night, helping me quiet my mind, and tune out my toddlers on occasion during the day. There's over 100 million people around the world who use Calm to take care of their minds, and I'm so happy to be one of them.

I also love Calm even more because they have a gift for our Girls Night community. For listeners of the show, Calm is offering an exclusive offer of 40% off of a Calm premium subscription at calm.com/girlsnights. If you go to calm.com/girlsnight, you can get 40% off of unlimited access to Calm's entire library. In case you need to hear that again, that's calm.com/girlsnight.

Thank you Calm for being an amazing sponsor and for all the extra hours of sleep you've helped me get over the last few years. We just love having you.

[00:28:37] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! We have a brand new sponsor here at the Girls Night podcast, and I am so honored to have them because I just love what they're doing. Our new sponsor is [Modern Fertility](https://www.modernfertility.com).

Modern Fertility is an easy and affordable way to test your fertility hormones at home with a simple finger prick. You mail it in with a prepaid label and you'll get your personalized results within 10 days.

Their tests will give you insight into things like your hormone levels, your ovarian reserve, which is how many eggs you have compared to other women your age, and other important fertility factors. If you want kids today or maybe one day in the future, this clinically sound information about your body can help you make decisions that are right for you.

So you may or may not know this, but one in six couples struggle with infertility. And my husband and I happen to be one of them. Carl and I, the planners that we are, spent years talking about every single aspect of what it would look like to have kids before we ever even started trying. We talked about how many kids we might want and when we wanted to start trying and how babies would impact our lives and how our lives would impact babies and so much more.

We did everything we could to gather all the information possible so we can make wise decisions about such an important part of our lives. I remember specifically

asking my doctor if there was any sort of test or exam or something that we should do before we started to try, just to make sure that everything was working the way that it should.

And we were told, "Nope! Go ahead and start trying. And if it doesn't happen within the first 12 months, we'll start doing some tests." It didn't happen in those 12 months, and I really, really wish we had had more information sooner.

Friends, there aren't many decisions bigger than having a kid. But for many women, their fertility is a giant question mark. Modern Fertility believes that knowledge is power. And when you know more, you can have informed conversations with your doctor and make better decisions for your body, your health, and your future.

Right now, Modern Fertility is offering our listeners \$20 off the test when you go to modernfertility.com/girlsnight. That means your tests will cost \$179 instead of the hundreds or thousands it could cost the doctor's office.

Again, you can get \$20 off your fertility test when you go to modernfertility.com/girlsnight. Again, that's modernfertility.com/girlsnight. Modern Fertility, thank you so much for sponsoring our girls night. We just love having you.

[00:30:59] <music>

Stephanie: I think as I was thinking through like personal boundaries, I think my phone is the biggest one for me. And I had this moment a couple of weeks ago... You know, there's constantly so much going on in the news and in the world. And I go in and out of seasons where I'm like... I think I saw someone that called it doom scrolling a couple days ago, like where I'm just like, you know, trying to read up on everything hoping that maybe that'll make me feel better. And it never does.

But I was trying to take a step back from that, but I still was feeling really anxious. So I'm getting my babies ready for bed. They're in the bathtub. I'm like getting towels out and lotion out. You know, with twins, we have to like... we have a dance of how we get them into bed at night.

And somehow during that dance, I can hear them giggling in the bathtub. We're like halfway through bedtime routine, I pick up my phone and I sort of accidentally get on Instagram. And I feel like everyone's like, "I know how you accidentally get on Instagram," I don't know.

And I'm really careful about the people that I follow. You know, that is a boundary for me is I need to follow people who are uplifting, who are inspiring, who are

positive, who are kind, who, you know, I'm not like super prone to compare myself to. You know, I have really clear boundaries.

But even so, one of the people who had gotten through that filter, and this person has a lovely Instagram account, they had posted something really sad and hard from the news that day. So I'm mid bathtime, I'm thinking about lotion, and babies giggling and getting the girls to bed and what I want for dinner, and then all of a sudden, I'm seeing this super hard news thing. And it just like jumped in front of my face, basically.

And I kind of threw my phone down. And it took me out in the moment completely. And I was instantly mad. Like I was mad at this person. But this person is allowed to post whatever they want. Everyone is allowed to post whatever they want. But I have to choose what I let in. So I like threw my phone down, was instantly mad, was instantly out of the moment, was instantly stressed out.

And then I picked my phone back up again and I deleted Instagram because I needed a little bit more of having a boundary... The boundary I had set, the fence wasn't high enough for that season of life. So I don't have it on my phone currently. I do it for my computer. I download it when I need it, and then I delete it again.

But I am learning that I have to be really, really, really careful about when I open the door to information. Because there's some times when I'm not prepared for what's going to walk in.

Dr. Sasha: Yes, yes. And then there's this whole thing in the world that really tells us again that if you were a good citizen, you would read that and engage. Actually, it's such a wrong approach to, again, your priorities and your wellness and your wellbeing.

You know, only you know that at that time of night, your priority are your girls and getting them in bed and spending time with them. But we fall into this, like, oh, we have to consume everything, and we have to feel everything and we have to...

And it's very very much perpetuated I think in our world today. And then we wonder why people are burned out and depressed and have anxiety and all of these mental stresses that, you know... And I'm not saying like be a person to just put your head in the sand and don't engage in what's going on in our world. That's not what I'm saying. But there's a time and a place and only you honestly know what, when, and how you can consume that information. And I think if you don't have boundaries, it will take over your whole day.

Stephanie: Yes. Only you know when you can. And then you have to decide when you do, which means you have to decide when you don't. Like in that moment, like my

kids, I mean, they were... My husband was with them so they're not in the bath by themselves. But like they need to get out of the bath within like 30 seconds.

It is time for them to go to bed. I'm taking care of a physical need of my children. And that has to take precedence. Like, it's not the moment for me to sit and grapple with this really hard thing going on in the world. But if we don't decide when is a yes, and especially when it's a no... I didn't mean to. I didn't click on that person's profile. I didn't even really mean to open Instagram. It just I was like, closing out apps on my phone or something. It really feels like it's sort of jumped in front of my face, and I was like, "Okay, I really need to set this fence higher because I wasn't in a place for that in that moment."

Dr. Sasha: And it's also important to... You know, I always say boundaries don't just keep the bad out, they keep the good in. And boundaries allow something that could be very positive in our life to stay positive and not to become a negative.

And if you don't have boundaries around the most precious things in your world, they will eventually become a source of negativity or a weakness or something bad in your life, quite frankly. So at least in my life I've learned that I have to have boundaries around the most important things.

Stephanie: Tell me more... I want to hear just a couple more examples. Just anything that comes to mind. I think like how you have boundaries around the most important things in your life to keep the good in.

Dr. Sasha: A very good and I think common thing is boundaries with your family. I know so many moms who don't have boundaries with their kids because they're operating constantly out of a feeling of guilt. I see this a lot in women that work outside of the home. They just feel like when they're at home they're trying to make up for lost time that they've been away, or they've been working, and so they have zero boundaries for their kids.

So their kids are allowed to interrupt them, you know, come in all spaces, stop what they're doing. They prioritize their kids above their own health, which is the most dangerous thing to set actually as an example for your kids. And they just have no boundaries with their kids.

And when I say, "Well, this is a cause of your stress. Why don't you create a boundary around this?" they're like, "Well, we've been gone all day." I'm like, "What does that have to do with teaching kids good boundaries? You know, that's so important that we teach our kids boundaries.

So a very common thing that I do is, you know, I teach all women to have a space in their house that is just for them. It can be a [inaudible 00:37:35]. It can be a chair. It can be the pantry door shut. It can be a closet, you know. But you have to teach your kids that "When mom is here, don't interrupt me. I'm having me time."

Because what you want to teach your kids is to do the same thing. You want them to have a space that's a safe space for them to go and withdraw from brother or sister or parents and just have a moment for themselves.

So you know, people who say, "Oh, I have a two year old, they can't learn that," yes, they can. And they will. I have taught this to all my kids. I have a little area in my house that if they see me sitting there, they know like, "Do not approach unless you're hemorrhaging and you need to be taken to the hospital. Do not approach mom." And it just allows you to have boundaries.

Another thing is boundaries with our extended families. A lot of people feel like they have to go to every birthday party, every family gathering, every whatever. And they don't have boundaries with their extended family, and it causes a lot of conflict between you and your partner if you're married.

It can be very difficult and challenging to set boundaries around our extended families. But if you don't do that, again, you're just setting yourself up for conflict. I always say clear as kind. For example, you know, we all have people in our families that we may not gel with, we may that may trigger us to have negative thoughts or behaviors.

And a lot of times we don't realize that we have power over that to just walk away or just set a time limit. So I will say like, "We're gonna go here for an hour, or we're gonna go here for two hours." Or "if this person starts talking to me about this political thing that I have zero desire to delve into talk with, I have it in my power to say, "You know, I'm going to actually go take a little walk," or "I'm actually going to go in and check on who so and so and not feel bad about it. Like not feel guilty that you don't want to listen to Uncle Ed talk about whatever political tyrant he's on today.

So these are kind of boundaries that we have to give ourselves permission and awareness to set. But I always say, a boundary that lives in your head is not a boundary. You have to express it to others. So make sure that you're saying you know, "Family, I'm going to do this today," or "family, I need you to give me this time," or "family, when Uncle Ed does this, mom may walk away for 10 minutes. Everything's fine. I'm just taking a breather." So you have to express those boundaries.

Stephanie: I feel like you have such a better relationship with Uncle Ed too if you're not having those conversations with him. Having that conversation with him is not a requirement for a good relationship. It's just not.

Dr. Sasha: Correct. Correct.

Stephanie: So if you decide this is not one of the people that I'm going to engage with on this topic, and you set that boundary, then you can talk to him about his grandkids. You know what I mean? You can talk about the weather or pickleball that he's picked up or you know, just whatever the thing is. You can actually bond over something. And that wouldn't be possible if you're sitting there arguing.

Dr. Sasha: Well, this is another common belief that leads to zero boundaries is like you should be able to talk to every single person about everything and be fine. No. Again, you are not meant to be on this earth to please all people or like all people or serve all people. That's actually not the point of your purpose. And you're not going to.

Like there's just going to be some people that you don't enjoy spending an hour with. And that's okay. It's fine. So you have to kind of get this in your brain to say, "Who and how do I want to put boundaries around this interaction?" And then be kind and clear about it.

Stephanie: Two things that have helped me. One is sometimes is replacing the word "boundary" with "rule." I'm a rule follower. I like rules. My husband is like the opposite. So he'd be like, "I'm not keeping. I'm not setting rules. I'm not keeping rules." But sometimes that word just helps me come up with new ideas. Like setting a rule for myself.

Also, setting it ahead of time is the only way I can do this. Because I am the queen of like I want to... I mean, the girls in our community know this so well because I've talked about it so much. But like, do you want to come here and do this thing? Yeah, absolutely. One, because it sounds fun; two, because I like you; three, because I want to make you happy.

And then I totally haven't considered any of the other things going on in life, and therefore I'm over-committed and angry about it. And the people who need me most don't get me because I've said yes to this thing. That as an example.

Or you know, going into a family situation, if I don't think about it ahead of time, then all of a sudden I'm like knee deep into a conversation about like when I'm going to have kids with Aunt Susan. And Aunt Susan is just telling me that by the time she was my age she had seven of them and that I'm really behind. And Aunt Susan is not someone I want to listen to anyway.

So if I can think ahead of time of like, you know, I don't want to talk about my fragility at this family function. I just don't. So if I can think about that ahead of time, I can think of like, what I am interested in talking about is what I'm doing at work. So if someone brings it up, I'm going to pivot to work. And therefore, I'm prepared when that moment happens.

Or another thing, especially with schedule that I really had to train myself to do, which I'm still not great at is to say, "Let me check my calendar before I say yes to something." And just that pause. Thinking about it ahead of time, making the rule for myself that I don't say yes to something right away, my response will be, "I need to look at my calendar," gives me the breadth I need to make the decision I want to make.

But I just need to make some of those rules for myself or some of those boundaries ahead of time because then I don't feel as blindsided in the moments. Like I'm not good at boundaries in the moment if they're not decided ahead of time. Does that make any sense?

Dr. Sasha: Correct. 100%. And it's just being very intentional with where you put your energy and your time. Again, if you're not intentional, you can't really be surprised that you're living in a world of overwhelm and over-functioning. Over-functioning to me is like the new self-harm.

It's like we have all these people that are just over-functioning in our world. And then they're like, "Well, this is what I'm supposed to be to be a good... whatever." And it leaves people at their worst for the people that matter the most to them. And then they wonder like, "Why can I do this?"

So I think it's really important that you do exactly what you described is you're really intentional and think ahead of time. I like to do this on Sundays. On Sundays, I look at my calendar, and I go, "Where am I missing boundaries in this calendar in this week?"

And many times things have slipped through that I know by the time I get to Thursday I'm going to be exhausted, I'm not going to be able to do that. I need to set a boundary and actually email that person and say, "No, I can't show up or I'm not gonna be able to show up." I apologize and say, "I have too much on my plate this week."

When you start doing that intentionally every week, those become less and less because you open up spaces because you learn like, "I'm going to need more space. I'm going to need more time. I'm going to need more energy on this day or that

day." But again, if you're not intentional with it, other people will just set the priorities for you.

Stephanie: I have a girlfriend that says, No plans are plans. So she's like, you know, you look at a weekend and you have nothing on the calendar. Well, you have plans. So someone says, "Are you free?" You can say no, because you have plans to do nothing.

I have a really hard time with that. It feels like if I have anything left in my cup or my schedule, and I don't give it away, it feels like... I don't know. It feels so selfish honestly. If you're thinking about a cup of water and you're pouring it out and pouring it out and pouring it out, where's the line? Or how do we figure out what it is for us between I have some left and I still have some to give, versus I have some left and I need to keep that for me?

Dr. Sasha: Well, I think the older and the more that we age, the more things get put on our plate if we're not really intentional and careful. I think if you are operating at a 20% level, like the 20% charge, you're right on the line of red. I don't think that's how we are actually meant to live.

And yet, what we do oftentimes is when we are at 80% charge, we take on more and more and more. And we don't anticipate life. I always say have the trauma room ready. And what I mean by that is we have a trauma room. Every level one trauma center actually has a room set up for a trauma to come in at any minute.

Now, it's really expensive to keep that room set up. We have equipment in there. We have drugs in there. We basically close that room and just leave it open when we could be doing surgeries there. So it's costly, but it's worth one life. Right? I would say one person that we save exceeds the cost of that room to keep open.

Oftentimes in our life in our week, we don't have a trauma room setup. We don't have space in our week. And then we think, "Oh, we should fill it. We should be doing some other thing in that room. But that's a really false belief.

And we always have to think about why. Why do I feel guilty staying home and doing nothing today? Why do I feel guilty? Where is my self-worth coming from? Is my self-worth coming from saying yes to everyone and making everyone happy? That's not a good place for where you want your self-worth to come. Is my self-worth coming from pleasing others or working myself to the bone? That's not a good place for your self-worth to come from.

In the book, I go deep into questions about, do you believe you have worth to set boundaries, that you actually have the permission to set boundaries? And really get

into that deep kind of self-improvement and self-reflection work to ask yourself those questions.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. I love the idea of the trauma room and I'm really grateful for the work that you do. I meant to ask you about this sooner. You talk about kind versus restrictive boundaries. Tell me the difference between those.

Dr. Sasha: A boundary that is kind it really is transparent and clear and allows other people not to have to question your mood that day, or what the temperature is in the room or what's going on in your life. It's just a very clear boundary.

And it's very different than a restrictive boundary, which we tend to think of restriction boundaries as like, "Oh, I'm not going to be their friend," or "I'm not going to answer their emails at night," or "I'm not going to do these things.

And if you just reframe it and you realize how kind boundaries are, that it's really about you, it's not about the other person, that you're just trying to protect and live your priorities, you become someone who other people actually respect for the transparency, and that you become someone that other people feel like they can share their boundaries with you.

So when you say, "I'm gonna go on vacation and I'm not going to check my email for a week," a restricted boundary would be like, "Oh, she's not working on vacation because of whatever." A kind boundary would say, "I don't answer emails on my vacation week, and therefore I don't expect or want you to either. I want to respect your health and wellness, and I want you to go away for a week and have a week off and I do not expect you at all to respond to my emails." So that's the kind boundary versus a restrictive boundary. And I think it's really important that we recognize the difference there.

Stephanie: I like how you said the temperature in the room because I think... We actually talked about this on an episode recently, that there are things all over Instagram that say like, "No is a complete sentence." And if someone like you love, if you said, "Hey, do you want to go to lunch with me today?" and you responded, "No," they're like, "Oh my gosh, is she okay? Did I do something?" The temperature in the room here just got really cold. And all of a sudden I feel like there's more distance between us.

Whereas if you just responded, like, "You know, I've been up for the last 24 hours with a sick kid. I really just can't today. Can we reschedule?" I'd be like, "Oh, my gosh, of course." And that's really transparent. I know what's going on with you.

That's something that my husband and I have talked about a lot when it comes to work. You know, sometimes I feel like for me the more I understand what's going on at work for him, the more empathy I can have and the more space I can give him, and the more I can help.

Whereas if he just says something like, "I have a lot going on this week," and leaves it at that, I don't really know what to do with that. It's really helpful for him to say, "You know, I have this project due on Friday or this..." Even just that one extra moment of explanation helps me so much. I feel like I can be on his team and be like, "Okay, I'm gonna take over this, and I'm gonna take over this, I'm gonna take over this." I feel like I'm helping with this project also by taking things off his plate. And it just takes like another second of explanation.

Dr. Sasha: Yes, yes, because it takes away having to assume positive intent. Because when we're tired, we don't. The first thing that goes out the window when you're tired or someone else's short with you is you don't assume positive intent. So as much as we try to, it's the first thing that goes out the window. But an explanation... You don't have to assume. It takes that assumption out. You're like, "Oh, they would love to have lunch with me but they'd been up with a kid for 24 hours. So they can't today."

I think it's just really good for us to recognize that most people... Like I love the phrase "if we really understood how little other people think about us, we would be shocked." There's that quote out there. And it's so true.

Most people are just trying to get through their day and they're just trying to get to the end of their day and do a good job of their day. They're not thinking about you or all of the stuff that you've got going on. So the more clear you can be about your boundaries and where you're going to put your time and energy, it just pays off dividends for relationships, both at work and at home.

Stephanie: I love that. I think the hope is that people are really respectful of our boundaries and that it gives them permission to set them as well. What do we do if someone does respond the way that we're afraid they're going to? Like we set a boundary and our fear is they're going to think I'm lazy if I say no to this, and they do think we're lazy, or they respond in a way that makes us think that or they're gonna think I'm mean if I say no to this, and they think we're mean. What do we do with that?

Dr. Sasha: Great question. I talked about in the book something called the boundary setting model and how to set the boundary and how to go through the thought process. It's a four-step process. It's super easy. So that you've thought about that worst-case scenario. So then if it happens, you've already played it out in your mind about what your response is going to be.

Most of the time when you get what I call boundary backlash, so set the boundary, you get some backlash, most of the time it's coming from a place of jealousy. Because the person is actually jealous that you've set a boundary because they've never done that, or they've never even thought they could. So this is very common.

Like, you know, "Oh, we have to go to this work thing at night, and I don't want to go." "Well, why do you have to go?" Well, everybody always goes." Well, if anyone said no or explain why they don't want to go, you'll be the first person to do that. You do it and everyone else is like, "Well, why did she get to set the boundary?" They're jealous. Most of the time the boundary backlash we get is jealousy.

Sometimes people are going to think you're lazy. And you have to go, Okay, is someone thinking I'm lazy more important than my health and well-being and living my priorities? Is someone's thinking that I'm not a team player more important than what my family thinks of me or with the people I'm trying to live my priorities with think of me?

That's the real question you're asking yourself. Am I so afraid to set the boundary because of what someone else is going to think about me? Because even if they respond rudely to you or they'd say something rude to you, it's gonna last 30 seconds. They're going to be done with that thought and not thinking about you in five minutes. And so I always teach women it's worth the negative interaction. Whatever happens, it's worth it to set the boundary.

Stephanie: That's so good. That's so good. I'm sure I've talked about this on the show before, but something I talked about with my counselor maybe six months ago was we put together... I think it's changed. But you know the old food pyramid that like pyramid instead of... I think now it's a plate?

Dr. Sasha: Yeah.

Stephanie: We talked about the pyramid and who is on my pyramid: Who is at the top? Who is the very most important person? And trickling it down from there. Who's on my pyramid? I've said this a bunch but this has been so helpful for me. It feels really cruel to rank your people like that. But I've really needed to do that because otherwise I give everyone equal importance. Because that's what I would like to do. If I had infinite time and energy, I would like to give my whole self to literally everybody.

But if I recognize that either I can respond to this email or either you could respond to those emails or be present at dinner, and the people who sent you the email don't really care very much, like they don't, it's not urgent, they don't need a response

right away. Like, it'd be nice to get a response, but they don't need it. But your kids actually really need you.

Like thinking through that ahead of time and having that mental picture of your pyramid and going, "Okay, my kids are higher than this random person who has an inquiry about this random thing," it shows you like how uneven it is.

I don't know why. I really just need that though. I need to go, "Okay. I have five minutes, two different people are asking me for something. One is one of my daughters and one is some person I've never met before who's asking me for, I don't know, something random in an email. My daughter is more important, obviously. I don't know, sometimes it's not obvious in the moment because we just want to please everybody.

Dr. Sasha: Correct. Yes. And it's really interesting when you take that pyramid and compare it to your calendar. That is a big... I've done that. You know, I try to do that at least once a year. Normally around January, I have a little self-retreat day, I call it, and I do that pyramid exercise. And then I look at my calendar, and it's so convicting because I realize, "Oh, my goodness, my calendar doesn't match the pyramid." And that's where boundaries really come in is because they can allow you to get your calendar and your time and your energy to be as close to that pyramid as possible.

Stephanie: That's so good. Just as we're finishing up, if you could go back and give yourself some advice when you were turning 30, what's something that you would tell yourself?

Dr. Sasha: I would tell myself that it's okay for some people to be wrong about me, to think wrong about me, to have wrong opinions about me. It's okay. Because I think there's so many times in my life that when I was in my early 30s I really wanted people to think good of me and well of me. And if they didn't, it just devastated me to the point where I would work harder to earn their approval, or I would change who I was, or I would change my priorities.

And I wish that somebody would have been whispering in my ear, "It's okay that they think wrong of you. Just keep doing what you know are your priorities. Just keep being your authentic self. Don't change just to get that one person's approval."

Stephanie: That's so good. Sacha, thank you so much. Thanks for being here. Thank you for being such a great example for us. I'm so glad to know you.

Dr. Sasha: Thank you for having me.

[00:58:28] <music>

Outro: Guys, isn't Sasha amazing? I love her, and I love this conversation. I'm so happy I got to share it with you.

One thing I wanted to mention quickly is I know we talked about a lot in today's episode. And so if you want to find the links to any of those things, all you have to do is go to my website. It's girlsnightpodcast.com. And for every episode, we have a blog post with the show notes. All the links will be there for everything we talked about including all of Sasha's contact info so you can follow her and so y'all can be friends.

The other thing I wanted to mention is if you haven't had a chance yet, it would mean so much to me if you would take just a quick second to leave us a rating and review on iTunes. We've gotten so many amazing five-star reviews from y'all and you've left the sweetest comments. I can't tell you how much it means to me. And it helps out the podcast more than you can imagine. So if you haven't yet, please take just one quick second to leave a rating and review. Thank you so much.

All right, friends. That's all we have for today. But we'll be back next week with another episode of girls night. I'll see you then.