

# The Guide to Standing Up for Yourself in the Workplace

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In the event of a medical emergency, call a doctor or 911 immediately. Reliance on any information provided by this website is solely at your own risk.

Hey there! I'm Mary!

I am a life coach and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist.

I've been in the healthcare field for over 20 years, working in schools, residential facilities, and on military bases. Again and again, I've been in jobs where the health of the employee is not valued, and actual self-care is only promoted when someone is on the verge of or in the middle of a breakdown.

I'm passionate about changing the way we, the helping professionals; the nurses, therapists, physicians, and specialists value our own physical and mental health.

The whole system needs an overhaul, but we can't do that if we are sick. First, we need to focus on ourselves. And I need you to know that taking care of yourself is important not just for you, but for all of us.

No matter how toxic your job is right now, you can begin the process of creating strong, healthy boundaries in your personal life. I know it might be easier said than done, which is why I created this guide for you.

If at any point you have questions, feel free to reach out to me at EMAIL.

Now it's time to go and focus on yourself (what a concept, right?).

Sending you lots of love,  
Mary



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If you are anything like me, it probably seems like an easier task to just up and move to another country, than to say “no” to someone’s request. And if you realize that you are being taken advantage of in some way, it would be preferable to poke out your own eyes than to stand up for yourself and create a conflict.

We have been taught that we have to make and keep other people happy and we continue to do so at the expense of ourselves.

But, that’s not you anymore! You are learning how to take care of yourself and to prioritize your health.

Standing up for yourself is not an easy task, but once you’ve done it a couple of times, you will find that it will not cause you to burst into flames or explode, and that life will go on afterwards.

This worksheet provides the steps you can take to begin speaking up and saying no.

## Step 1: Prepare

- ✓ Complete the worksheet on the last page to get really clear on what you are thinking and why
  - Define the problem and describe it accurately, use facts, without judgment
  - What is your reasoning for responding the way you are
- ✓ Decide when you will speak with them
  - Will you schedule a meeting or drop by “casually?”
  - Even if it not scheduled with them, schedule it with yourself. Put it in your planner and stick to your decision
- ✓ Practice saying the words out loud
  - If you know someone who could practice with you, ask them
- ✓ Practice standing up straight and practice relaxing your pelvic floor
  - When you stand up straight, it tells you that you are confident and strong
  - Your pelvic floor includes everything located in the region below your belly button. When you relax these muscles it sends a signal to the rest of your body that you are safe and there is no danger.
- ✓ Practice a short breathing meditation
  - Do not jump around and get yourself worked up.
  - Although this seems like a good idea, it tells your nervous system that you are ready for a fight. If you are already a nervous person, this will put you into the Fight, Flight, or Freeze mode.
  - You are not fighting, you are just speaking calmly. You don’t want to run away or avoid the situation. And freezing isn’t helpful when you are trying to remember your argument.
- ✓ Write down your **strong reason why** from the worksheet on a note paper. Fold it up and stick it in your pocket. When you are faltering, or feeling nervous, you can put your hand in your pocket to remind yourself how important this is.
  - Alternatively you can bring something else like a gemstone, a note to yourself, or a different small token to put into your pocket or hold onto that will ground you and remind you of your reason for this difficult conversation

## Step 2: Show Up

- ✓ This may sound obvious, but show up when you said you were going to. No matter how sweaty, scared, or shaky you are, show up and have your own back.
- ✓ **Do not** talk yourself out of it.
- ✓ Before you walk in the door, remind yourself to **stand up straight** and **relax your pelvic floor**.
- ✓ Remember your why.
  - Put your hand in your pocket to touch the note paper with your strong why
- ✓ Look them in the eye. Smile if it feels right. Continue to look at them, not at the floor.
- ✓ Say what you need to say
  - Hit the 3-5 bullet points you wrote down on your worksheet, just like you practiced
  - If you stumble, keep going
  - If your face turns red, keep going
  - If you are sweaty, keep going
  - If your voice cracks or gets really high, keep going
  - If you cry a little, keep going
  - If they say something demeaning, keep going.
  - Do not apologize. You are not sorry for taking up their time and you have done nothing wrong
  - If they seem to have lost interest, keep going
- ✓ Thank them for their time

### **Step 3: Review**

- ✓ First! Give yourself a pat on the back- you did something difficult, regardless of the “negative” feelings you or the other person may have felt
- ✓ Write down what went well
- ✓ Write down any follow-up you’d like to do
- ✓ Schedule a time to think about this and analyze.
  - I don’t want you thinking about this constantly, and your brain is going to want to replay the scenario over and over again. You might have a lot of dreams about this and worry about the fall out.
  - Schedule time to think or write about it before you go to sleep or the next day and when you find yourself awake at 3am, remind yourself that you will think about this tomorrow and choose something else to think about in the moment
- ✓ Celebrate
  - Tell a friend or family member that will understand about what a badass you are.
- ✓ Self-care
  - Do something that makes you feel good
  - Do something relaxing like taking a bath, a nap, or reading a good book

## Things to remember:

- If you stumble on words, that's ok
- If you sweat a lot, that's fine
- If you forget some things, that's not a problem
- If you're new to this, the first time you have these conversations won't be pretty, but they will still be effective
- These conversations might feel awkward, embarrassing, terrifying, difficult. Are you willing to feel awkward, embarrassed, terrified or challenged in order to get what you want?
  - [Listen to episode #14 of The Real Life Wellness Podcast with Mary and Keysa](#) on how to allow yourself to feel emotions
  - Or just fill out [this worksheet](#) to begin practicing allowing your emotions
- You don't have to explain yourself or apologize.
  - No is a complete sentence. I like to use, "No, thanks."
  - You have a right to an opinion
  - You have a right to speak up
  - You have a right to have your own feelings

## And the most important thing:

They may not like what you have said. They may feel annoyed. They may be angry. They may be unhappy. They may be disappointed.

The point of standing up for yourself is not about making them happy.

It is about you finally being in your own corner and having your own back.

*Their feelings are their responsibility.*

# The Guide to Standing Up for Yourself In the Workplace Worksheet

It is helpful to be very clear about what you want to say before speaking up for yourself. Answer each of these questions thoughtfully in preparation for confrontation.

Free write about the problem. Don't hold back here. Write down all of your thoughts, your feelings, your anger, your sadness, your upset.

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Now, define, very clearly, the problem. Do your best to keep the description objective. Leave out the opinions, the drama, and the emotion. Write out only the facts.

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Why is this important to you?

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What are the possible consequences of speaking up? What are you afraid will happen if you speak up?

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What are the possible consequences of staying silent? What are you afraid will happen if you stay silent?

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What do you want to say? Free write here.

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Create bullet points here. Write down 3-5 points that you want to be sure to hit when speaking. Make them short so you can memorize them. Put them in order of importance, so you can be sure to get the most important one out first.

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Write down all of the possible counter arguments or protests and your answers to each -Include protests like, “But, I want you to,” “Please!!!,” and my favorite, “Okay, fine, I guess I’ll do it myself.” (these are manipulative!)

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Bring your worksheet to our [Saying Goodbye to Burnout for Healthcare Professionals](#) free facebook group and post it for feedback. We will be happy to give you pointers and answer any questions to help you get prepared.