

Aileen (00:00)

Hi everyone and welcome back. We really hope that January is TTUL so far.

Julie (00:05)

Yeah, hopefully everyone has had a good start to the new year. How are you, Aileen?

Aileen (00:10)

I'm good actually, I've had a great start to the new year. The weather's not bad, even though, you know, it's in London, it's actually, no New Year's resolutions, Feels great, you know, I don't think I did them last year either, but it just feels, you know, no pressure. What about you?

Julie (00:16)

Yeah, relative.

No, no pressure. Yeah.

I'm pretty good actually. Yeah, I'm reflective this week, I suppose. And actually this topic that we're going to talk about, which one of our listeners brought actually, it has made me think and it's about feeling torn between wanting space and wanting connection.

I think it's an interesting dichotomy.

Aileen (00:46)

Such an interesting one, especially at this, in this life season. Because I love that message and how much people love us discussing two opposing words or words that play into one another. absolutely love those chats and it's, this is something I've struggled with too, boundaries versus It's how do you protect your peace without feeling like you're shutting people out?

Julie (00:50)

Yeah.

know that's the thing, because we all want to belong, right? To family, friends, our workplace, even the communities. It's so innate in us. Even the loners like me, it is because we want to belong somewhere. But sometimes I think belonging can start to feel conditional, like I can only belong if I keep saying yes, you know, and that,

Aileen (01:11)

Yep.

Yes.

the pressure, I feel that pressure

and I'm very much on my own most of the time, you know, it's just two of us, so I know. And that's where the self-worth comes in, isn't it? Because when you don't feel worthy enough as you are, boundaries feel like a threat to connection, when actually they're the bridge to healthier connection. It's taken me so long to come to this realisation. Plus, I had so much energy when I was younger that I didn't need to create so many boundaries.

Julie (01:35)

Yeah.

Aileen (01:58)

this all changed at this life stage.

Julie (02:01)

Yeah, that's a good point. Because when we were younger, we have the energy to keep connections that aren't possibly the best, because you've got energy for all kinds of all the connections. But now, as you say, it's not like that. And it's funny, because when you look on that back on that concept of belonging through life, I think many of us learn that belonging means being agreeable.

As kids, like, you you're praised for being easy, adaptable, polite, know, for fitting in. So when we set boundaries now, I think it just triggers all of that. And it's possibly a bit kind of guilt, like almost like we're betraying someone or being unkind.

Aileen (02:37)

Yeah, we're kind of betraying ourselves when we keep saying, yes, that's the thing. And think it's really important to say, I didn't shy away from conflict when I was young. And I actually stepped into it because I was a mediator in the family. was just a role that I took on myself from a really early age, know, pre double digits. I could sense tension before it even surfaced. And I'd step in to manage it, often sticking up for my dad, sometimes my brothers against my mum.

Julie (02:39)

~ that's it. We are, yep.

Aileen (03:06)

And what that did was teach me to stay hyper-attuned to everyone else's emotions. And I learned to protect the emotional temperature of the room. Now, I never learned to into my own. So justice felt like safety, but my needs would always last. So that's why I kept saying yes to everything.

Julie (03:24)

Yeah, I think that's important distinction, isn't it? Because from the outside, it can look like strength and that advocating is kind of like boundaries. But, in many ways internally, because as you're saying, you're wired to scan and manage everyone's feelings, which is actually the

opposite of boundaries for yourself. Like psychology would say that's a foreign response because belonging becomes conditional on emotional labor.

So even though it's not the kind that a lot of us associate with boundaries, like fitting in or saying the right thing, saying yes, it's still the same because you stayed connected by carrying the load, still doing what others expected, which was to defend, to mitigate, et cetera. And I think it's when we do these things, either carry the load the way you did, or just bend and help when you don't have the capacity to be kind and you just try and fit in.

I think that's where resentment and self abandonment come in.

Aileen (04:18)

Yeah, I love this phone response. it's a recent thing that's come into my vocabulary. I'm learning so much from people online, but. then yeah, it chips away at your self-worth because you're effectively saying, my needs are less valid than yours. And I've really had to relearn that saying no doesn't make me difficult, but it does mean that I'm valuing myself. I'm getting good at it.

Julie (04:24)

Yeah.

Yeah,

I'm actually getting so much better at it. It's and it's a big learning because I think for a lot of women, for many different reasons, you know, saying no is hard because I read a study recently that said more than 60 % of women struggle to set boundaries in personal relationships because they fear rejection or conflict. And it's rooted in conditioning. I mean, we're taught that maintaining harmony is part of being good and acceptable.

Aileen (05:08)

It's just so wrong. And yet, when we override our own needs to keep the peace, we create inner conflict instead. I remember saying yes to things that completely drained me, whether it was dinners, favours, conversation. But then eventually, I would feel resentful because my energy was all dried up.

Julie (05:30)

Yeah, and you don't get that space to yourself that you need to revive or to, gain your energy. But I've done it too, absolutely. And I think resentment is often the red flag that a boundary has been crossed. Even if you never said one out loud, it's your body saying, okay, I've gone too far. And I think we have to learn to recognize that.

Aileen (05:48)

Yeah, it's interesting too, when you finally do set a boundary, not everyone takes it well. Even though a boundary isn't something you do to someone else, it's something you honour for yourself. I've had people react as though it's rejection because they're not used to me in this

new version. But that's when you realise their version of love was based on your compliance, but not your wellbeing. Which isn't good.

Julie (06:14)

Yeah,

it's not good. Absolutely. I think it's such an important point because true belonging, the kind that's rooted in it isn't about fitting in, you know, and actually I love what Brene Brown says on this, another of her quotes that resonated the first time I read it. And that's that fitting in is becoming who you think you need to be, whereas belonging is being who you are. And that's a massive distinction and really brings the point home on

Belonging, I think.

Aileen (06:43)

Yeah, I love that quote as well. Brin A. Brown is amazing. But it's true. mean, the more grounded I've become in my own worth, the less tolerance I've had for relationships that only accept parts of myself. You know, that expectation that I'm still available when they expect it. And that shift can feel really lonely at first, especially for me, because I'm on my own with the child most of the time. But it's actually making room for the genuine connections.

It's really been interesting to see the reaction from people who don't like this new version of me, although they haven't said it to my face. You know that, but there has been comments, you know, I know there has been a couple of comments from people who can't understand my lack of availability though. And I'm like, I'm a single parent. I two days out of 14 for myself. And those days are mainly spent getting food shopping, washing, getting organized for the next week. So it doesn't leave much time for me.

Julie (07:19)

But you know, don't you?

Aileen (07:40)

know, I used to travel everywhere to see everyone make the effort. I can't do that at this life change stage. And some haven't taken that very well. And sometimes I just can't be bothered explaining myself. And maybe this is wrong in my part, as I think they should just understand why I'm glued to my location at the moment. It's been a huge adjustment for me and I've made peace with it. So I think they should make peace with it too.

Julie (08:07)

Yeah, I don't think it's wrong on your part though. I mean, that's just where you're at. And it's not that you're doing it to harm anyone. That's just the reality. And you have to draw boundaries to protect your piece. And I think that's the paradox though, isn't it? Because when you honor your boundaries, you probably might lose a few surface level connections, but they're the people that

you, who you really only fit in with. As Brene Brown would say, you had to be a certain way to maintain that connection.

But then the more you draw those boundaries and they're drawn out of kindness to yourself and not actually anything that's meant to the other person. But I think the more you do that, the more you gain deeper and more nurturing connections, you know, with the ones where you actually belong because you're honoring and making space for you. And the ones who around you as that person, that's where you belong. It's like you're pruning to make space for growth and the right people.

Aileen (08:58)

Yeah, it's such a great way to put it, pruning to make space for growth. I'm not a gardener, but I do like that. Yeah, I really notice who stayed when I've started saying no to things. And the people who truly valued me didn't see it as rejection. They've actually really respected it, which is great. Yeah.

Julie (09:05)

Ha ha.

Yeah, because it is great. I think that is the

thing about it, right? And it's also the thing about self-worth, because it's that inner compass that helps you discern who's meant to walk with you. Because without it, I think you can confuse attention for affection and acceptance for love.

Aileen (09:33)

Yeah, and it's exhausting to keep performing for belonging. I mean, when your worth depends on keeping everyone else happy, you'll never feel at peace because it's impossible to control how others receive you. People are going to talk about you, whether it's good or bad. Anyway, that's just life. We can't control that.

Julie (09:52)

Yeah.

No, they will anyway. That's the thing. And if it's not these ones talking about you, it's someone else. So the only constant you can have is to, to, choose for yourself and choose kindly. I always say to my kids, the two things I want you to be a kind and confident. Because confident enough to make the best choices for yourself, but also doing that with kindness. And it's worth noticing, I think as well, that boundaries aren't just about saying no to others.

Aileen (09:57)

Yeah.

Julie (10:18)

They're about saying yes to yourself. They protect your energy, time and mental space to turn up as you. And that's all tied to self-worth.

Aileen (10:28)

Yeah, and it really is about saying yes to yourself. And I think that's for a while I thought boundaries was more about the saying no aspect, but it's not. It is about yourself. I have noticed that when my self-worth dips, my boundaries soften and I start saying yes to things again. But when I'm really grounded, I can say no, like you said, know, kindly, but without apology and without apology is a big one. I have a couple of friends who never apologize for saying no.

And I really love the way they value themselves enough not to over-apologise. And I've been getting much better at this as well, because I was an over-apologiser. But it's a true sense of self-worth when you stop that and just owning where you are at and not having to over-explain why you can't do something. Because let's face it, no is a complete sentence.

Julie (11:21)

It is, and it's a huge one, because I've had to learn not to do that either. Like before I started working on my self-worth, I always apologized and over-explained if I had to say no to something. Like I'd done something wrong by not having capacity for it and worried that people wouldn't like me for it or they would reject me, which is huge, because it's that worry that the listener brought up was draw boundaries and then it compromises on connection.

And that was the fear I always had if I drew boundaries that people wouldn't accept me or the connection would be broken. it takes quite a bit to relearn that. And I think we always do dip and regress, but me, the trajectory is definitely going the right direction. But I think drawing boundaries, it's a constant practice because it does feel so unnatural. And I think that's both big and small boundaries.

Like as you say, not over explaining, as we were saying, or even replying instantly. Cause I used to think if I didn't reply instantly, they'll think I have ignored, you know, blah, blah. But I think just let silence and time be fine. Get used to that being okay. Because those small shifts, they signal to your nervous system that you are okay. You don't have to earn your place. You then begin to find, think the right people and are accepted for who you are. And

that's true belonging, that's not just fitting in as Brene Brown says.

Aileen (12:45)

I find it funny, there's a couple of people who contact me and if I don't reply quickly, you know, they have a goal and yet they might have said something quite, you know, they're in trouble or so I'll reply straight away and then they come back a month later. This is quite uneven. I was really worried and you've just...

Julie (13:05)

It is uneven. think people have these expectations, but

I think that's where people are used to you being a certain way. And so then they pulled you up on it. And then that they're the people that it's hard to change for because they won't accept a different you because the relationship's conditional, which is not good. No, it's not what we want. It's in AI. I know exactly what you mean, but then I have other friends who'll just, who I'm used to them. They just don't reply. They just will.

Aileen (13:12)

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, not what we want.

Julie (13:34)

come back whenever and I don't, it's fine. Like that's just how they are. But yeah.

Aileen (13:36)

I didn't read into it, yeah.

It's that feeling of self-trust. You know when you know your own worth, you don't need to bend to belong. You can just stand as you are and the right people will meet you there.

Julie (13:50)

yeah, definitely. It's just getting used to that being the fact because we're so not used to it. So I think you're listening and you struggle with it, a few things that might help reflecting on our conversation are, I think, notice where belonging feels heavy. Because if you walk away from certain people or spaces feeling drained, like,

That's information, start to clock that and ask yourself, am I trying to belong here by being someone I'm not? Because that's fitting in. That's not belonging

Aileen (14:23)

No, and reframe no, because not rejection, it's redirection. Every no creates space for a more aligned yes, so it should be positive.

Julie (14:33)

Yeah, I think redirection is a great way to put it actually, because you're gonna feel something. So you might as well try and relabel that for yourself rather than feeling bad about it. And also I think check your inner dialogue. Because when you feel guilty for saying no, there'll be a script going on in your head and you have to remind yourself, I'm not unkind for having limits. I'm responsible.

for my piece, not everyone else's comfort. I don't need to fit to belong. I think that's the big one. You don't need to fit in to belong, because that's what we do think.

Aileen (15:05)

Yeah.

Yeah, I did that for far too long, but I just can't now. It's just, I'm too tired. And practice micro boundaries, you know, start small, delay a reply, like you said earlier, ask for time or just sit in silence and let it wait. Cause those tiny acts of self-respect, they build self-worth.

Julie (15:12)

Yeah.

Yeah, And I think you have to also remember that belonging starts from within. I when you belong to yourself first, you stop chasing that external validation, because that's something that I found I did a lot, chase that external validation to feel okay and to think, okay, I'm if you don't do that, if you just sit with yourself and be okay with yourself, I think then you...

You attract that genuine connection because you're showing up as yourself, honestly.

Aileen (15:58)

Absolutely. So if you're ever worried no makes you cold or difficult, it doesn't. It makes you really clear.

Julie (16:07)

Yeah, and clarity is kindness. It's how we teach people where we end and they begin, not to push them away, but to protect the space where connection can thrive.

Aileen (16:18)

Because true belonging

does start with self-worth. When you stop earning your place and start owning it, the right people find you and you finally find peace.

Julie (16:28)

Yeah, and we'd love to hear your thoughts on this one. Do you struggle more with boundaries or with the fear of losing belonging? Leave us a voicemail or a DM. We might share your reflections in a future episode.

Aileen (16:38)

Yeah if this episode resonated, share it with a friend who needs a reminder that protecting your peace doesn't make you selfish, it really makes you strong.

Julie (16:47)

And actually it makes you kind, kind to yourself and kinder to others because you can show up as you and there's no resentment. it's builds a much better paradigm. also some of you have been asking about our sanity checks, they're over on Patreon now and you can sign up for the price of a coffee per month. We look forward to seeing you there.

Aileen (16:49)

Yeah.

See you next time, bye.

Julie (17:06)

Bye!