

Respecting your boundaries

Supporting to set limits

Caring for others starts with caring for yourself.

The risk

When kaimahi (workers) feel pressure to say yes, they may over help or agree to unsafe compromises. This can erode safe ways of working, especially in moments where people don't want to let others down or feel they need to push through.

Why this matters

When boundaries aren't respected, injuries are more likely to occur and hazards can go unaddressed. Supporting kaimahi (workers) to set boundaries helps them stay safe, speak up earlier and trust that their safety will be backed every time.

Your role as a leader

As a leader, you set the tone for what is acceptable and supported.

What this looks like in practice:

- Make it clear that safety boundaries are expected, not optional.
- Back kaimahi (workers) when they pause or say a task isn't safe.
- Respond calmly and practically when concerns are raised.
- Check whether the plan, equipment or support needs to change.
- Reinforce that speaking up protects everyone.



Barrier busting

Here are some common barriers that stop kaimahi (workers) from setting their boundaries and what you as a leader can remove:

- **Time pressure or pressure from others:** slow the moment down. Make it clear that pausing to check safety is expected, even when things feel busy.
- **Fear of letting others down:** reinforce that saying no to an unsafe task is caring for the person and themselves, not a failure.
- **Unclear expectations or role boundaries:** be explicit about what is within their role, within the support plan, what requires help and when escalation is the right step.
- **Lack of readily available equipment or help:** remove practical friction by ensuring access to people, equipment and plan changes when needed.
- **Previous experiences of not being backed:** follow through when boundaries are raised so kaimahi (workers) trust that speaking up leads to action, not consequences.

Ask the team

Use these questions to open up a **kōrero** (conversation) about what your team is really experiencing:

1. When do you feel most pressure to say yes, even if something doesn't feel safe?
2. What makes it easier or harder to speak up in those moments?

Commitment

Complete this commitment with your team or with individuals eg, **This week I/we will use one clear safety boundary phrase if my/our boundaries are overstepped'.**

This week I/we will...

Continue the kōrero (conversation):

Follow up regularly, focusing on respecting boundaries by asking curious questions such as **'What would help you feel more supported to state your boundaries next time pressure shows up?'**.



Other resources

- **Respecting your boundaries** quick reference card
- **Respecting your boundaries** micro card
- **Move Well: Skills for kaimahi** elearning
 - Holistic wellbeing
 - Te Whare Tapa Whā
 - Conversations that matter
 - Communicating my safety
- **Move Well: Focus on leaders** elearning
 - Your role
 - Vision and support
 - Conversations that matter
 - Applying the learning - coaching guide