

Boundaries

What are they?

- Symbolic "fences" that protect our value
 - Keep others from coming into our space
 - Keep us from going into another's space
- Contain our reality (thoughts, feelings, choices, limits, behaviors) - our sense of who we are

Two components

External

External boundaries keep our physical body separate

- Allows us to choose the distance we want between ourselves and others and whether or not we allow someone to touch us
- This also includes sexual boundaries for distance and touch

Internal

Internal boundaries protect our reality (thoughts, feelings, choices, limits, behaviors)

- Take responsibility for our reality versus blaming others
- Releasing the responsibility of the reality of others
 - Refrain from negative control, projection, and manipulation

Myths about boundaries

- I am being selfish or disobedient (feelings of guilt or shame)
- I will hurt others or be hurt by others
- They are permanent

Boundary violations

- Resentment: always is a boundary issue

External

- Getting into a person's space or personal belongings (unwanted touch, going through personal drawers/closet, checking a phone or purse/wallet)
- Listening to a conversation without permission

Internal

- Yelling, name calling, ridiculing
- Shaming or patronizing (devaluing of any form)
- Negative Control: telling someone how they should feel, think, or act

Boundaries are personal

Each person's boundaries will look different from others

- What hurts? (how do you stop the pain?)
- What feels good? (pursuing joy)
- What is mine? (knowing your reality)
- What am I willing to lose or give up?

Barriers to boundaries

- Our Belief System (history and distorted thinking)
- Enabling: destructive form of helping
 - We attach ourselves to another's need for us
 - This builds resentment and we feel used or sorry for ourselves
- Enmeshed: overly involved in another
 - Excessively worry about another's problems
 - Become dependent on those around us which causes us to detach from ourselves

When we don't have boundaries

- We have defense mechanisms
 - Avoidance
 - Procrastination
 - Self-sabotage
 - Drama

Setting boundaries

- Realization of our own person apart from others (knowing our reality)
- Separation of identity: allows for "I" "me" and "self"
 - Gain self-awareness
 - Define your reality
- Saying "no"
 - Set limits
 - Practice self-control
 - Create goals and pursue with continued patience
- Putting boundaries into words
 - I would like to revisit this later when the energy has dissipated
 - I hear that you think I am [insert negative stuff]. I would like to think about this because I'm not sure what to do with it

Boundaries and relationships

- We are **RESPONSIBLE** for knowing the impact of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors on another
 - Be sensitive but do not control
- When impacted or pressured by others, it is our responsibility to manage our reactions
 - Let go of the expectation
 - Communicate
- We **DECIDE** to adjust or relinquish something
 - We do not mindlessly lose our reality to another
- Openness (being vulnerable) and having boundaries leads to connection and intimacy

Boundary Sketches

Healthy boundaries

Healthy boundaries are like a house with a door with a doorknob on the inside only separating us from others

- We choose when to open the door and let someone in
 - Allows for connection
- We choose when to leave the door closed
 - Protects ourself from others
 - Protects others from ourself

No boundaries

No boundaries are like having nothing separating us from others

- We do not know when we are being abused or abusing others
- Difficult to say "no"
- Can be easily taken advantage of

Partial boundaries

Partial boundaries are like having gaps in your "wall" that separates us from others

- At certain times and/or with certain people can set limits and protect oneself
- At other times and/or with other people may abuse or be abused

Walls

Walls are like having a brick wall with no door isolating us from others

- Give solid protection but do not allow for connection at any level causing more isolation
- People may move from one kind of wall to another
- Anger - message of an erupting volcano
- Fear - retreat from others to keep safe
- Silence - emotions are turned off; "the silent treatment"
- Words - talks over people; oblivious to contribution of others

References

- **Facing Codependency** by Pia Mellody*
- **Changes that Heal** by Dr. Henry Cloud*
- **Boundaries** by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend*
- **Beyond Codependency** by Melody Beattie*
- **Maybe You Should Talk to Someone** by Lori Gottlieb*