

# Boundaries

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## 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

## 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

## 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

## 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

- **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\*