



"Your personal boundaries protect the inner core of your identity and your right to choices... boundaries define your soul and they help you to guard it and maintain it."

Henry Cloud, PhD, Author of 'Boundaries'

BALANCED BOUNDARIES I

Understanding, establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries is essential for our well-being. Boundaries define us: what is me and what is not me. In the physical world, boundaries are clear. Fences, walls, yards, etc. Non-physical boundaries, are not as clear, yet they are just as important. They allow for healthy, trusting connections, while keeping you protected in many ways, building a foundation of self-trust and safety.



WITHOUT HEALTHY BOUNDARIES WE LACK A SENSE OF SELF

Healthy boundaries are necessary to maintain positive self-regard. Boundaries require knowing our needs and limits. If we have poor boundaries, we tend to have a low awareness of our own needs and our Sense of Self gets lost in the needs and expectations of others. Skills are required to affirm our needs and limits in order to draw "a line in the sand." Your genuine needs, values, and emotions differentiate you from others and these are examples of "boundaries" in of themselves.



FUNCTIONAL VERSUS RELATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Functional boundaries refer to your ability to complete a task, a goal, or discipline yourself in a healthy way. Relational boundaries involve your ability to understand your own needs and wants within the context of a relationship; to discern who is safe and trustworthy, and who isn't; to realize how much you want to allow another within your 'property line' and share of yourself.



TRUST IN YOURSELF

You will resent yourself and lose your own trust if you do not establish healthy boundaries and make yourself the highest priority. Recognize that healthy boundaries allow you to take better care of yourself—emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. The healthier you are, the more able you are to help others.



GOOD IN, BAD OUT

Emotional boundaries distinguish our 'property' so we can take care of ourselves. We need to keep things guarded and safe within our 'fences' and keep things out that are high risk. Fences also have gates, just as our boundaries need openings to connect with others we deem safe. Connecting is a human NEED. Without understanding boundaries we may be *too closed off* and be starving for connection! This is where vulnerability and sharing your truth *with the right people* is important. Other people have good things to offer us and we need to open our hearts to them.

QUESTIONS THAT REFLECT MUCH OF THE CONFUSION WE HAVE ABOUT BOUNDARIES

Why do I feel disconnected from my partner? Why do I feel disconnected from myself?

I feel like I give so much to others, but I am not appreciated for it... how do I get appreciated more?

What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?

Why do I feel guilty or selfish to ask for what I want or put my needs first?

I don't want to be controlling, but how can I get him/her to stop doing [that hurtful thing]?

How do I get him/her to stop talking to me like that?

Being loving and kind is part of my values... so isn't it wrong to set limits on this, especially with my family?

I'm seeing red flags with someone I just started dating ... what do I do?

How do I help someone in need while maintaining appropriate boundaries?

Do I tend to overly-please, act in passive aggressive ways, or try to avoid issues to keep the peace?

Why is it difficult for me to hear 'No' from other people?

Do I know what my needs, wants and limits are? And am I able to communicate them well?

What is the difference between 'requests' and non-negotiable 'requirements' for healthy relating?

Which of these questions do you wonder or worry most about, and want answers to?

What do you hope to gain from learning and practicing healthy boundaries? Describe specific goals.

BOUNDARIES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR EXPERIENCING GENUINE, LOVING RELATIONSHIPS



SECURITY When we do not feel safe, secure and loved (due to current or previous experiences of betrayal, disappointment, abuse, etc.), it will have an immediate impact. Our frustrations (resentment, confusion, hurt, anger, etc.) are often due to a lack of clear boundaries, causing distress in relationships!



CLARITY AND TRUST RATHER THAN CONFUSION, STRESS AND REACTIVITY

Boundaries create a sense of SAFETY. When you don't feel safe – not just physically, but emotionally and psychologically safe, your natural reaction (intentional or not) will be to protect yourself by either withdrawing (FLIGHT MODE), attacking (FIGHT MODE), or placating/door-matting (FAWN MODE) by not setting limits and being a prisoner to the wishes of another, leading to resentment towards yourself and others, and a loss of trust in yourself and others.



Withdrawing, attacking, and placating are all maladaptive protective behaviors that destroy any chance for trust, vulnerability, and real love. Without boundaries you can kiss intimacy goodbye!



Clear, healthy boundaries prevent blurred lines, confusion and distrust. They provide the opportunity for real intimacy, a sense of safety, trust, and warm, engaging, genuine connection. By cultivating boundaries, we also build trust in ourselves, honor our own ability to protect ourselves, creating an overall sense of safety in relationships, and lifting our self-esteem.

SIGNS OF EITHER WEAK OR RIGID BOUNDARIES: IDENTIFY WHAT MAY BE TRUE FOR YOU

I am usually the only one in my family or friendships that can really help when someone is in need

I have a deep need to be liked and it's possible my self-worth shifts with others' opinions of me

I don't like to share much about myself, even in close relationships

I avoid upsetting others, even if it means hiding the truth; I have lied at least once to keep the peace

I feel a sense of emptiness that is hard to explain... an aching loneliness perhaps

I do not recall a time where I simply said 'No, thank you,' without a detailed explanation

I find decision-making a real challenge and have trouble making up my mind

My relationships feel difficult and exhausting, like I am doing all the work

I will go to great lengths to not disappoint people by over-working, over-giving, etc.

I feel responsible for making sure people are happy around me

I have been more controlling than I'd like to be (investigating social media, snooping texts, etc.)

I have over-shared private details of my life with people I just met (includes dating)

I feel like a burden when asking for help, even with close friends

I feel overlooked at work, in my family, and even in my social circles

I tend to get blamed a lot for things that are not my fault

I rarely state my needs and limits; I may not know what my needs and limits are

I feel guilty or lame for wanting alone time, like taking a nap, self-care, peace and quiet, etc.

I feel like others do not have much respect for me

I feel disappointed and let-down by others a lot

I am unclear about my purpose in life

Now that I think about it, I do not know what a boundary really is

I do not trust myself when it comes to balancing my needs with others

I have over-texted, over-called, been hypervigilant or extremely anxious in relationships

I recall a time when I said yes to something I didn't want to out of guilt

I tend to feel far more invested and attached to a person than I should be for how long I've known them

I feel lonely, isolated or disconnected even after spending time with others

I feel like no one really knows or understands the real me

I enjoy most of the time I have for my work

It is hard to trust love so I read into things to detect lies (analyze every word, attempt to mindread, etc.)

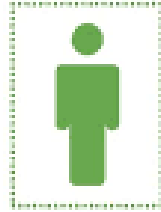
I have a pattern in my relationships of hot or cold

BOUNDARY SCALE



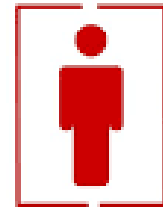
Compliant / Porous
Says Yes to the Bad

- Difficulty saying no to others
- Over-shares personal info
- Not aware of own needs/wants
- Overinvolved in others' problems
- Tolerate abuse or disrespect to avoid feeling guilty or selfish
- Fears rejection if they do not comply



Healthy / Balanced
Says No to the Bad and
Yes to the Good

- Self-disciplined & Self-compassionate
- Doesn't compromise values for others
- Appropriately shares personal info (does not over share or under-share)
- Appreciates and respects others' boundaries, needs and limits
- Aware of own needs, communicates them clearly and appropriately
- Authentic and vulnerable with those that are trustworthy for connection



Avoidant / Rigid
Says No to the Good

- Avoids intimacy and close relationships
- Inability to ask for help
- Have few close relationships (may have many acquaintances)
- May seem detached even with romantic partners
- Distances to avoid possibility of rejection

It is possible to be BOTH and swing from one extreme to the next depending on the relationship

SUMMARY OF BOUNDARY PROBLEMS: WE CAN DEFAULT TO MORE THAN ONE TYPE

Boundary problems are not limited to those that "can't say no." People who don't respect others' limits also have boundary problems that can have a major impact on relationships and their overall well-being in life.

The Compliant may also be an Avoidant. While The Controller can also be a Nonresponsive type at the same time, causing multi-faceted dysfunction in relationships. A Compliant may also be a Controller, while a Nonresponsive can be Avoidant. Types can shift depending on the relationship due to lack of awareness and not building healthy boundaries.

	CAN'T SAY	CAN'T HEAR
NO	<p>Compliant <i>Neglects own needs</i> Feels guilty and reacts to this guilt by allowing themselves to be controlled by others. Weak boundaries.</p>	<p>Controller <i>Neglects others' needs</i> Aggressively or manipulatively violates others' boundaries. They may lack awareness, but it causes damage nonetheless.</p>
YES	<p>Nonresponsive <i>Neglects others' needs</i> Sets boundaries that keep them neglecting their portion of responsibility to care for, connect and love another. Fear showing genuine self.</p>	<p>Avoidant <i>Neglects own needs</i> Rigid boundaries, pervasive distrust in others, unable to receive care and connection, making authentic relationships highly unlikely.</p>



Compliant / Porous: Saying Yes to the Bad

Fuzzy and indistinct boundaries. Can seem like chameleons. Default into FAWN Mode in times of stress or in relationships overall (people-pleasing, codependency patterns, self-love deficiency, etc.). Melt into the demands and needs of other people and lose their sense of self.

Why setting limits and boundaries is difficult:

- Fear of hurting another's feelings
- Fear of abandonment, rejection, or being alone
- Programmed to be dependent on another
- Fear of someone else's anger to the point of walking on eggshells and being compliant
- Fear of punishment or disappointing someone
- Fear of feeling deep, painful shame, and guilt for failing to please others or saying 'No'
- Controlled by an overstrict, critical conscience, 'Inner Critic' and self-condemnation

As you were growing up, what did you learn about setting boundaries and saying 'No'?

Compliants tend to lack "discernment radar" of who is safe and trustworthy, and who is not. When have you noticed this "radar" dysfunction? What bad things and/or people have you said yes to?

Your overstrict, people-pleasing Inner Critic may make you feel too guilty to say 'No.' When have you been compliant, saying yes, but wish you could've said 'No'?

What maladaptive protective strategies have you used to avoid disappointing others (lying, taking blame, put-up with maltreatment or abuse, helping people that hurt you, staying in toxic relationships)?



Avoidant / Rigid: Saying No to the Good

Dislike asking for help. Difficulty recognizing own needs. Withdraw when they are in need and may feel unworthy of love. Counter-dependency. Avoid opportunities to receive care even though they give care.

Why setting limits and boundaries is difficult:

- Fear asking for help as this can trigger feelings of vulnerability or 'weakness'
- Fear of being judged or seen so they display a wall of perfectionism
- Programmed to perceive their problems, feelings, wants, and needs as bad, weak, or shameful
- Usually controlled by a berating, self-judging Inner Critic
- Fear of receiving support and love, yet readily offer it to others
- Fear having needs as this may lead to feeling rejected or let-down by another

Are your boundaries more like walls than fences?

Describe a time you had a personal problem and you asked a friend or family member for help. Who did you ask? When did this occur? What was the result?

How does it feel for you to reach out and ask for help and receive another's act of kindness?



Controller: Not Respecting Others' Boundaries or Manipulating Others

Lack skills to take responsibility for their own emotions, self-worth and self-validation. Feel automatic need to control others to avoid feeling helpless. Most are not aware of their actions. Feel abandoned or rejected if they don't get their way. WE CAN ALL EXHIBIT SIGNS OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS AT TIMES. Examine how and why control tendencies occur for you.

Why respecting others' limits and boundaries is difficult:

- Fear the unpredictability of others' love so they attempt to control people
- Fear others' boundaries and independence will result in abandonment
- Fear feeling weak and powerlessness if others' are not 100% compliant
- Programmed to perceive and measure "love" with how much others submit to their control
- Subconscious deep belief that their self-worth and lovability depends on others' compliance

In what relationships and situations have you been perceived as a controller? Why was it important for you to have control? What did you fear would happen if you stopped controlling?

The primary problem of controllers is that they project responsibility of their own feelings and self-worth onto others. Then demand compliance. When have you had a Controller in your life?

When have you felt a Controller's failure to accept you as you are? How did you deal with this?



Nonresponsive: Not Hearing the Needs of Others

Lack awareness of others' needs and fail to connect with healthy attunement and empathy. Although we need not take on the responsibility of 'watering another's lawn,' nor are we responsible for another's feelings, beliefs, thoughts, behaviors, and choices, we do have responsibilities to acknowledge and value others' needs and boundaries, especially loved-ones.

Why hearing others' needs and boundaries is difficult:

- Fear feeling suffocated, engulfed or overwhelmed by the needs of others
- Despise their own natural human needs as they fear feeling 'neediness' or reliant on another
- Despise the intrinsic need to connect with others (triggers feelings of 'helpless neediness')
- Programmed to be overly-absorbed in their own desires as if survival is dependent on it
- Despise their inability to be complete themselves and try to force 100% self-sufficiency
- Project this shame-based, self-sufficiency onto others and despise others' need to connect

When have you felt smothered or overwhelmed by someone that you now realize had good intentions?

When have you felt engulfed or irritated at someone for wanting to know you at a deeper level, beyond small talk and daily tasks?

Have you experienced a Nonresponsive? How did it feel? Were you able to feel seen, heard, valued and connected with? What did you hope for? What was missing?

TYPES OF BOUNDARIES



SKIN

This is the most obvious and basic boundary that defines who you are. As an infant, you slowly learn that you are separate from your mother who cuddles and embraces you. If you have been neglected physically or physically violated, you may have difficulty establishing your rightful boundaries and/or asking for what you need in order to feel loved and comforted. Understanding your sexual and physical patterns is empowering. Rebuild your capacity to ask for what you need, while creating boundaries.

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



WORDS

Words are also rather tangible in that they exist in the physical world, stated verbally or in writing. The word "No" is the most basic boundary-setting tool we have. It protects you. Your words let you know where you stand and thus build 'edges' that help identify you and thus give you a sense of Self. "I do not like when you raise your voice at me" provides a clear message about your values and rules within the context of communicating and relating. Stating your needs and limits builds self-trust and self-esteem.

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



TRUTH

In order to cultivate healthy boundaries, you must be in acceptance of reality. Many proven therapy modalities are grounded in observing false beliefs and realizing truth, such as: CBT, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Mindfulness practices. *Also, be honest.* "There is always safety in the truth... many people live scattered and tumultuous lives trying to live outside of their own boundaries, not accepting and expressing the truth of who they are. Honesty about who you are gives you value of integrity, or oneness." Henry Cloud, PhD.

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



PHYSICAL DISTANCE

Physically removing yourself from a situation or person maintains healthy boundaries. The key is to identify when you have been hurt or abused (whether intentional or not), and create distance. Many times this is only way to show the other person that your boundaries are real. This provides you with the space to regain self-trust. Asserting your boundaries is an essential action step that sends a clear message: you will not tolerate maltreatment. This also provides others' opportunities to see their errors.

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



EMOTIONAL DISTANCE

Connecting emotionally is the deepest level of relating to another. Sharing aspects of yourself, your joys, your sorrows, your dreams and aspirations, your disappointments and regrets, are all gifts to be given to those who are trustworthy. Many are too quick to trust someone, over-share, resulting in feeling exposed. Cherish your emotional-self. If you have been betrayed or hurt by someone in the past, do not be too quick to trust someone in the name of forgiveness. This will only set you up for disappointment, which can erode your trust in yourself... resulting in shame, self-blame and anguish.

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



TIME

Give yourself permission to take time-off from someone or a project as needed. If you feel out-of-control or overwhelmed then this is a clear message that you need to schedule time for yourself to relax or be free to enjoy activities. Even a few minutes can make a difference. Remain connected with your feelings and emotions and body in order to take good care of your needs. If you have been violated or maybe just feel like you have been spending too much time with someone, you owe it to yourself to give yourself time and space. This time apart is an important part of relationships. Use "I" statements to state your needs, such as "I would like some 'me time.'"

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



OTHER PEOPLE

Boundaries are not built in a vacuum. Creating and maintaining boundaries is a team effort and involves others. We are a "communal" species. Remaining open to the support, friendship, and connection to and from others is a basic HUMAN NEED. And you need to cultivate the trustworthy relationships that allow for safe, genuine, interdependent connection to occur. Another reason you must open yourself up to support from others, is you may end up in isolation even in your own marriage! Your intimate partner is not enough connection. You cannot be totally reliant on one person for all of your human connection needs. Plus, it sets you up for abuse. Many clients have put up with abusive relationships, due to fears of being alone. Fear of being alone keeps many in hurtful patterns for years... afraid to set boundaries.

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



CONSEQUENCES

We need to back up our boundaries with consequences. This gives them weight, strength, power, and a tangible quality. Do not enable irresponsible behavior or maltreatment. You can save a marriage by not only stating your boundaries, but also following through. For example, "If you raise your voice at me again, I will file for a separation." Rather than nagging, placating, and enabling, which builds resentment, erodes love and self-trust. Same goes for parenting adult children, "I will not loan you more money until you pay me back the \$300 you owe me first."

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type



BOUNDARIES WITH YOURSELF

To rescue people from natural consequences is to render them powerless. Providing your children with love and limits, with warmth and clear consequences, creates confident children who feel a sense of self-trust and empowerment in life. The same goes for 'parenting yourself,' by providing yourself with love and limits. Do not reward yourself for destructive behaviors. Yet be prepared to face the natural consequences of your choices and behaviors. Be real with yourself and compassionate, rather than spoiling yourself or berating yourself. Realize the balance within goal setting and internal boundaries. This is not about being perfect. It is about balanced guidance and accepting the consequences of your choices and actions.

I already have balance with this type

I want to focus on creating more balance with this type

*"People with weak boundaries often have a hard time saying no. **Even saying no to yourself can be uncomfortable at times, as bad habits provide a sense of short-term comfort.** But the discomfort of saying no is far less draining and self-deprecating than doing something you truly don't want to do."*

BOUNDARY PROBLEMS VS HEALTHY BOUNDARIES: IDENTIFY WHAT MAY BE TRUE FOR YOU

BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

Oversharing, telling too much of yourself
Trust no one or trusting everyone
Take on others' problems as your own
Unaware of another invading your boundaries
Preoccupied, controlling, over-analyzing others
Act on first sexual impulse with new partner
Need to give to feel good about myself
Modify or overlook my values for another
Fall in love with a new acquaintance
Accept food, gifts, touch, etc. you don't want
Giving to those who have mistreated you
Take as much as you can for sake of taking
Can't say No, afraid of feeling guilty or 'bad'
Feel disconnected, unclear of your purpose
Let others describe your reality
Expect others to mind-read your needs
Expect others fill your needs perfectly
Codependent and/or controlling relationships
Neglect yourself and your self-care needs
High tolerance for abuse in relationships
Passive aggressive/Aggressive communication
Give to avoid feeling like you are a bad person
Expect someone to change or be what they aren't
Loses own needs and values in relationship
Avoid being single; need partner to feel worthy
Absorb feelings of others and feel responsible
Rely on others' opinions to define your limits
Avoid asking for help to avoid disappointment
Compromise your values to be liked

HEALTHY, BALANCED BOUNDARIES

Appropriate sharing of self with those you trust
Allow patience and cultivating trust with time
Aware of when the problem is yours or another's
Notice when someone violates your boundaries
Remain focused on your own health and growth
Build trust and connection prior to sexual intimacy
Provides balanced care for self and others
Maintain personal values despite others' wants
Decide if a potential relationship is good for you
Say "No" to food, gifts, touch, etc. you don't want
Self-respect: not giving to get someone to like you
Respect others: does not take advantage of others
Can say No or Yes and ok with others saying No
Trust your perspectives, values and goals
Define your truth as you see it based in reality
Know what you want and need, and communicate
Communicate in order to share your needs and wants
Interdependent relationships with reciprocity
Take care of yourself with gentleness and respect
Protect yourself and LEAVE abusive relationships
Direct and respectful, clear communication
Give for the sake of kindness, after own needs met
Accept others' as-is and set boundaries based on reality
Allows balanced individuality and connection
Strong sense of self-worth based on your values and life
Empathize, yet not responsible for others' feelings
You know your limits and respect others' limits
Able to ask for help when you need it
Live in alignment with your values and highest good