

Boundaries

For me, healthy boundaries are limits I set on my *own* behavior, rather than rules and restrictions I place on the behavior of others. I only have power to set my own boundaries, not to set somebody else's boundaries or boundaries for someone else.

For me, unhealthy boundaries are overt or covert attempts to control another person's behavior according to what I want and desire, rather than as a path to my own self-growth and serenity.

Why Set Boundaries? As a recovering co-dependent, I have the right to define my personal boundaries. I set my own boundaries in order to enhance my relationships, to promote my own serenity, and to ensure that my process of self-growth continues. My right to set healthy boundaries carries with it the responsibility for me to clearly communicate my boundaries to those persons closest to me who may be affected by my boundaries. I never use my boundaries as bludgeons for punishing another person or as a tool to control others.

Communicating Boundaries: Also, I don't assume or expect others to intuitively know and respect my boundaries. That is a fantasy. In regard to boundary setting, my boundary is "no surprises." If you are in a relationship with me, you are entitled to know my boundaries and the price for violating them *before* you violate them. Also, you are entitled to discuss the boundary openly and honestly with me. If warranted, I'll negotiate and adjust the boundary to help minimize any resulting conflict.

My Responsibility: If someone is violating my boundaries, and it is truly harming me or hurting me, I am responsible for doing something about the situation. I can express my boundary, but if they don't respect it, I can't *make* them respect it or own it. All I can do is protect myself from that person.

Guidelines: Here are the guidelines for boundary setting that are currently working for me:

- I will keep my boundaries as simple and as few as possible.
- I reserve the right to change my boundaries as I grow and change.

- I will communicate my boundaries lovingly and clearly, before they are violated, when possible.
- I will not become a boundary ogre. I will be mindful that my perspective of reality is unique, and will not use boundaries as a means of forcing my perspective upon others.
- I will endeavor to treat all people as my guests, especially those closest to me.
- I will be kind, yet firm with those people who choose to violate my boundaries. If they continue to do so, I will take the steps necessary to protect myself, with care and mindfulness, seeking the path of minimum psychological harm to myself, the other person, and any one else who may be affected.
- I will not use boundaries to intentionally create conflict in any relationship.
- I will re-examine and question my boundaries if unhealthy results occur because of the boundary (for example, a situation gets worse because of the boundary, rather than better).
- I will respect the boundaries that other people set and communicate to me.
- I will honor and accept that all people need room and space to grow; I will not expect the world to conform 100% to my expectations.

Questions I ask myself about my boundaries:

- Is this a healthy boundary?
- Am I setting this boundary for myself to enhance my serenity?
- Am I setting this boundary as an attempt to control someone else's behavior?
- Am I setting this boundary merely to antagonize someone else?
- Will this boundary honestly help me be a better person?
- Is this boundary still necessary? Do I need to let go of it?

Adapted from an article at:
<http://www.healthyplace.com/Communities/Relationships/serendipity/topics/topic004.htm>