

## BOUNDARIES

(Notes taken from Boundaries by Anne Katherine) *(Definitions more succinct)*

**What is a boundary?** A boundary is a limit or edge that defines you as separate from others.  
A boundary is a limit that promotes integrity.

**Invisible Circle!** Our skin marks the limit of our physical selves, but we have another boundary that extends beyond our skin. We become aware of this when someone stands too close. We are surrounded by an invisible circle, a comfort zone. This zone is fluid. A lover can stand closer than a friend, and a friend can stand closer than a stranger.

**Other Boundaries!** Other boundaries include emotional, spiritual, sexual and relational. You must have a limit to what is safe and appropriate. You have a border that separates you from others. Within this border is your *youness*, that which makes you an individual different and separate from others.

**Emotional Boundaries!** We have a set of feelings and reactions that are distinctly ours. We respond to the world uniquely based on our individual perceptions, our special histories, our values, goals, and concerns. We can find people who react similarly, but no one reacts precisely as we do.

When it comes to how others treat us emotionally, we have limits on what is safe and appropriate. We must learn that we need not sacrifice ourselves for others. If we let someone abuse us verbally, we have done neither of us a favor. When you let someone abuse or hurt you verbally, the other person is not advanced. Protecting yourself sets a necessary limit for both of you. That limit advances the relationship.

**Spiritual Boundaries!** You are the only one who knows the right spiritual path for yourself. If someone tries to tell you how and what to believe, that person is out of line. Being open to learning or exposed to a controlling person are two different things.

**Sexual Boundaries!** We have a choice about with whom we interact sexually and the extent of that interaction. Persons who have few or no sexual boundaries lose the respect of others and often the person with whom they are sexually involved.

**Relational Boundaries!** The roles we play define the limits of appropriate interaction with others. We have choices we must make concerning the types of social and personal relationships we have as well as the kinds of activities and conversations in which we participate.

**Moral Boundaries!** Everyone develops his own sense of morality. Due to the liberal society in which we live, we have a tendency to let others try to redefine our morality. When our morality is compromised, it is an assault on our very inner being. It is important that we draw strong moral boundaries and not be ashamed of them.

Our feelings are rich in meaning about the nature of our connections with others. When we are in contact with that, we can be guided by our inner selves, we can tell who we are, what is right for us. We can, therefore, know our emotional boundaries. By knowing our emotional boundaries, we can tell when someone has breached them. Being connected with our inner selves gives the strength to protect ourselves from violators.

**Protecting One's Self!** You are the guardian of your own body. Your life is yours. You are the one accountable for your choices. You bear the consequences of your decisions. Unfortunately, most of us have been violated in one way or another. We are not responsible for that harm. But it may cause us to believe we are born to be victims. We then continue to let others violate us.

When you protect yourself from even mild violations, a powerful message is sent through your body. It tells others that you are strong, you are valuable, you can keep yourself safe. When you protect yourself, you empower yourself. The more you stop yourself from being used and abused, the less you broadcast yourself as a willing victim.

Emotional boundaries define the self. One's unique self is composed of a complex of ideas, feelings, values, wishes, and perspectives that are duplicated by no other. Emotional boundaries protect this complex. What strengthens emotional boundaries is the right to say no, the freedom to say yes, respect for our feelings, support for our personal process, acceptance of differences, enhancement of our uniqueness, and permission for expression. What harms our emotional boundaries are ridicule, contempt, derision, sarcasm, mockery, scam, belittling comments, stifling communication, insistence on conformity, arbitrariness, the need of power, heavy judgments, any kind of abuse, abandonment, threat and insecurity.

A clean, clear boundary preserves your individuality, your youth, and defines you as separate from others. Strong boundaries build self respect and self esteem and increase the respect others will have of you.

**Growing With Boundaries!** Boundaries bring order to our lives. As we learn to strengthen our boundaries, we gain a clearer sense of ourselves and our relationships to others. Boundaries empower us to determine how we'll be treated by others. With good boundaries, we can have a wonderful assurance that comes from knowing we can and will protect ourselves from the ignorance, meanness, or thoughtlessness of others.

**Learning Boundaries!** We learn about boundaries by the way we were treated as children. We teach others where our boundaries are by the way we let them treat us. Most people will respect our boundaries, if we indicate where they are. With some people, however, we must actively protect our boundaries.

**Controlling Boundaries!** Our emotional health is related to the health of our boundaries. Healthy boundaries are flexible enough that we can choose what to let in and what to keep out. We can determine to exclude meanness and hostility and let in affection, kindness, and positive regard.

**Defining Boundaries!** There are two main types of boundaries, physical and emotional. Our physical limits are marked by our skin; our emotional limits by age, roles, relationships with those around us, requirements for safety, and choices about how we want to be treated.

I set my physical boundary by choosing who can touch me and how and where I am touched. I decide how close I'll let people come to me. Because I have a reverse gear as well as a forward gear, I can back away from someone who invades my personal zone.

I set my emotional boundary by choosing how I'll let people treat me. One way to do this is by setting limits on what people can say to me. Healthy, safe expressions of anger by people I care about are acceptable. Anger from an inappropriate person is not. I determine the range of personal comments, language and topics I'll accept from others. Sometimes we think that if we've let someone do something once, we have to let him or her do it again. On the contrary, we can change our minds, discover that we didn't like something someone said, and set new standards of behavior. Setting emotional boundaries includes deciding what relationships I'll foster and continue, and what relationships I'll back away from because they are not safe.

**Violations!** Violations come in two categories: intrusion and distance. Violations of intrusion include inappropriate personal questions, touching, and attempting to control how I think, believe, or feel. Violations of distance occur when intimacy is less or more than what is appropriate to the relationship. We need to know when someone with whom we have a personal relationship is invading our space or is too distance to be intimate.

**Feelings!** We learn emotional boundaries by the responses we get. When our feelings are met with disapproval or harshness, we tend to suppress them, to separate ourselves from our feelings, and to ignore the valuable information they have for us. Learning about and connecting with our feelings and the feelings of the other person is essential to complete boundary development.