



Building Better Boundaries

Created By:
The Self Help Alliance

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We hope that you enjoy our materials.

Thank you,



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Scope

This curriculum duration is 12 hours (1.5 hour sessions x 8 sessions). The curriculum plan followed the Kemp (1994) Curriculum planning model and Blooms Taxonomy. This workshop content was developed and will be implemented with a learner-centred approach.

Goal

On completion of this workshop learners will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of their current boundaries, identify various boundary types, and identify methods to enhance or create boundaries.

Outcomes

These outcomes build upon the belief that everyone the potential to understand the role boundaries play in our lives, and can develop/improve upon skills to set and maintain boundaries. Upon completion of this workshop you will be able to:

- ✓ Describe ways boundaries can be beneficial (Knowledge & Attitude)
- ✓ Identify and evaluate your own boundaries (Knowledge & Evaluation)
- ✓ Understand, define and evaluate different types of boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Identify ways of respecting other's boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Identify and evaluate different ways your boundaries have been set (Knowledge & Evaluation)
- ✓ Explore how you can begin to set or strengthen your boundaries (Knowledge & Attitude)
- ✓ Practice tools to maintain and strengthen your boundaries (Skill)



Section One

Introduction to Boundaries

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Understand the general meaning of boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Describe ways boundaries can be beneficial (Knowledge & Attitude)

Boundaries Defined

“Boundaries are a life enhancing system of “yes” and “no’s.” They are stop signs and borders you install to protect yourself so that it is clear that you own your life, make good choices, and pursue the authentic expression of who you are in the way you live, love, give and relate.”

“Boundaries are a limit you set between yourself and people due to thoughts, activities and things that aren’t in your best interest”

“The first boundary I drew was between myself and my habit of saying negative things about myself to others...Once I got a handle on that, I moved to setting limits on names I called myself, like ‘You stupid fool’ and ‘Loser.’”

~ Carl

(Source: Black, J. & Enns, G. (1997) *Better Boundaries: Owning and Treasuring Your Life*. Oakland, CA. Raincoast Books)

“All these boundaries - Africa, Asia, Malaysia, America - are set by men. But you don’t have to look at boundaries when you are looking at a man - at the character of a man. The question is: What do you stand for? Are you a follower, or are you a leader?”

~ Hakeem Olajuwon

“And this is one of the major questions of our lives: how we keep boundaries, what permission we have to cross boundaries, and how we do so.”

~ A. B. Yehoshua

What do boundaries mean to you and your life? If you choose, discuss your thoughts with the group.



What have Boundaries Done for Me Lately?

Boundaries help you to:

- **Define Your Identity** – you become clear and confident with yourself, and others know what to expect from you.
- **Protect Yourself from Violators** – boundaries let in what is good and keep out what is bad, so you remain safe and able to express your true self.
- **Bring Order** – without them, you are unable to regulate demands, ideas, dreams, responsibilities, opportunities, pleasures and activities. Life can become chaotic.
- **Promote You** – leaders and employers with good boundaries know that if you have good boundaries, you can be trusted to state clearly what you can and cannot do, welcome input and work passionately without burnout.
- **Protect Yourself from the Control of Others** – having clear boundaries makes it difficult for others to control you, and makes it easier for you to say no when you need to.
- **Preserve Your Purpose and Mission** – once these are identified, boundaries save you for the relationships and opportunities that best fit who you are.
- **Protect Your Finest Personal Assets** – which includes knowledge, body, skills, abilities, purpose and mission
- **Satisfy Your Need for Self-Confirmation** – by defining you and your personality.

Ineffective or Poor Boundaries Can Lead too:

- Loss of respect from self and others
- Loss of control of the direction of your life
- Increased chaos, distractions, and guilt.
- Loss of interest in life.
- Unmet goals and the stress of chaos can lead to hopelessness, depression or anxiety.
- Without personal boundaries, “You will act, sleep, work, groan, feel used and fulfill basic responsibilities rather than make choices to live and love fully, to work hard and nobly, to fulfill your purpose and to contribute passionately to your world.”

(Source: Black, J. & Enns, G. (1997) *Better Boundaries: Owning and Treasuring Your Life*. Oakland, CA. Raincoast Books)

Signs of Ignored Boundaries

You can tell boundaries are being ignored if you are experiencing one or more of the following challenges:

- **Over Enmeshment:** This requires everyone to follow the rule that everyone must do everything together and that everyone is to think, feel and act in the same way. No one is allowed to deviate from the family or group norms. Uniqueness, autonomy and idiosyncratic or unusual behaviors are viewed as deviations from the norm.
- **Disassociation:** This is blanking out during a stressful emotional event. You feel your physical and/or emotional space being violated and you tell yourself something like: "It doesn't matter." "Ignore it and it will go away soon enough." This 'blinking out' results in being out of touch with your feelings about what happened. It also may result in your inability to remember what happened.
- **Excessive Detachment:** This occurs when neither you nor anyone else in the group/family/relationship is able to establish any fusion of emotions or affiliation of feelings. Everyone is totally independent from everyone else and there does not seem to be anything to hold you and them together in healthy union.
- **Victimhood or Martyrdom:** With this, you identify yourself as a violated victim and become overly defensive to ward off further violation. Or it can be that once you accept your victimization, you continue to be knowingly victimized and then let others know of your martyrdom.
- **Chip on the Shoulder:** This is reflected in your interactions with others. Because of your anger over past violation of your emotional and/or physical space, and the real or perceived ignoring of your rights by others, you have a "chip on your shoulder" that declares "I dare you to come too close!"
- **Invisibility:** This involves you pulling in or over-controlling so that others, even yourself, never know how you are really feeling or what you are really thinking. Your goal is not to be seen or heard so that your boundaries are not violated.
- **Aloofness or Shyness:** This is a result of your insecurity from real or perceived experiences of being ignored or rejected in the past. This feels like a violation of your efforts to expand or stretch your boundaries to include others in your space. Once rejected, you take the defensive posture to reject others before they reject you. This keeps you inward and unwilling or fearful of opening up your space to others.
- **Cold and Distant:** This builds walls or barriers to insure that others do not permeate or invade your emotional or physical space. This too can be a defense, due to previous hurt and pain, from being violated, hurt, ignored or rejected. This stance is your declaration that "I've drawn the line over which I dare you to cross." It is a way to keep others out and put them off.

- **Smothering:** This results when another is overly solicitous of your needs and interests. This cloying interest is overly intrusive into your emotional and physical space. It can be so overwhelming that you feel like you are being strangled, held too tightly and lack freedom to breathe on your own. You feel violated, used and overwhelmed.
- **Lack of Privacy:** This is present when it seems to you that nothing you think, feel, or do is your own business. You are expected to report to others in your family or group all details and content of your feelings, reactions, opinions, relationships and dealings with the outside world. You begin to feel that nothing you experience can be kept in the privacy of your own domain. You begin to believe you do not have a private domain or your own space into which you can escape.

(Source: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/14718-building-healthy-boundaries/>)

Review the list of challenges of ignored boundaries above. Do any of them seem to be affecting your life? Discuss with you group some simple ways to begin work to remove these challenges.



Section Two

Where Do Boundaries Come From?

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Identify and evaluate your own boundaries (Knowledge & Evaluation)
- ✓ Identify your boundary beliefs and personal mission (Attitude & Skill)

How your Boundaries Were Formed

Identifying your Purpose & Mission

Your vision of your life is the first step to creating boundaries. If you have not yet taken the time to develop a vision, it is likely that your boundaries are also undeveloped.

Take the time to do this exercise, on your own or with the group. It may help you begin to understand what your life's vision is.

Begin with the End in Mind

Imagine your future 10, 15, even 20 years from now. You are at an event that is celebrating you, your life and your accomplishments.

There are to be four speakers at this event. The first is from your family, immediate and also extended (children, sisters, nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents). The second speaker is one of your friends, someone who can give a sense of who you are as a person. The third is from your work or profession. Finally, the fourth is from your place of religious affiliation or a community organization where you have been involved in service.

Think deeply. What would you like each of these speakers to say about you and your life? What kind of husband, wife, father, or mother would you like their words to reflect? What kind of son or daughter or cousin? What kind of friend? What kind of work associate?

What character would you like them to have seen in you? What contributions, achievements would you want them to remember? Look carefully at the people around you. What difference would you like to have made in their lives.

On the next page, take the time to write down your response for the different speakers, and, if you choose, discuss your thoughts with the group.



“The shortest route to better boundaries is to really like yourself. Better yet, really love yourself.”
Unknown

Family, immediate and extended

Friend

Coworker/Professional Associate

Person with religious affiliation or community group

(Adapted from: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by S. Covey)

A Personal Mission Statement

Using some of the responses from imagining speakers celebrating your life you can create a personal mission statement, philosophy of life or creed. It focuses on what you want to be (character) and to do (contributions and achievements) and on the values and principles upon which being and doing are based. Once you have a clear mission to your life, it is easier to set and maintain boundaries that help to keep you on this path.

This is something you do not need to write in one day, but you may want to set a deadline for yourself. Also, keep in mind that as your life changes, so might your mission.

Six Steps to Developing a Personal Mission Statement

Step 1: Brainstorm Ideas

In the space provided or on another page, write about each of the 3 topics below without stopping. This is free-writing, so do not worry about spelling, punctuation, etc. If you find that you cannot think of anything to write, just keep going and write the words or phrases that immediately come to mind. Remember, this is not a final draft. The purpose is to capture your ideas on paper. Spend 2 – 3 minutes on each question.

If writing is not a strength for you, ask a group member or other support to help you record your ideas.

1. Identify any influential people:

Identify one person who had (knowingly or unknowingly) a positive influence on your life. What are the qualities you most admire in this person? What qualities did you gain from this person?

2. Define who you want to become:

Imagine it is 20 years in the future. You have achieved all you ever hoped to achieve. What is your list of accomplishments? What do you want to have, do, and be?

3. Determine what is important to you today:

What are the 10 things that are most rewarding to you today? What do you live for and love in life?



Step 2: Take a breather

Take a deep breath and relax. Put your writing aside for a few minutes and walk away from it. If you are with a group, this might be a good time to take a break, wrap up for the day and do the last steps as homework or at your next meeting.

Step 3: Gather Your Thoughts

Review what you have written and circle, highlight or underline the key ideas, words, phrases that you would like to include in your mission statement.

Step 4: Write a Rough Draft

There are some personal mission statement examples on page 16 if you need help to get thinking. During the week, carry your rough draft with you: make notes, additions and deletions as needed each day. You might wish to write a whole new draft. This is an ongoing exercise. Your mission statement will likely change over time, as you will likely change. Take some time right now to compose a rough draft of your mission statement in the space below.

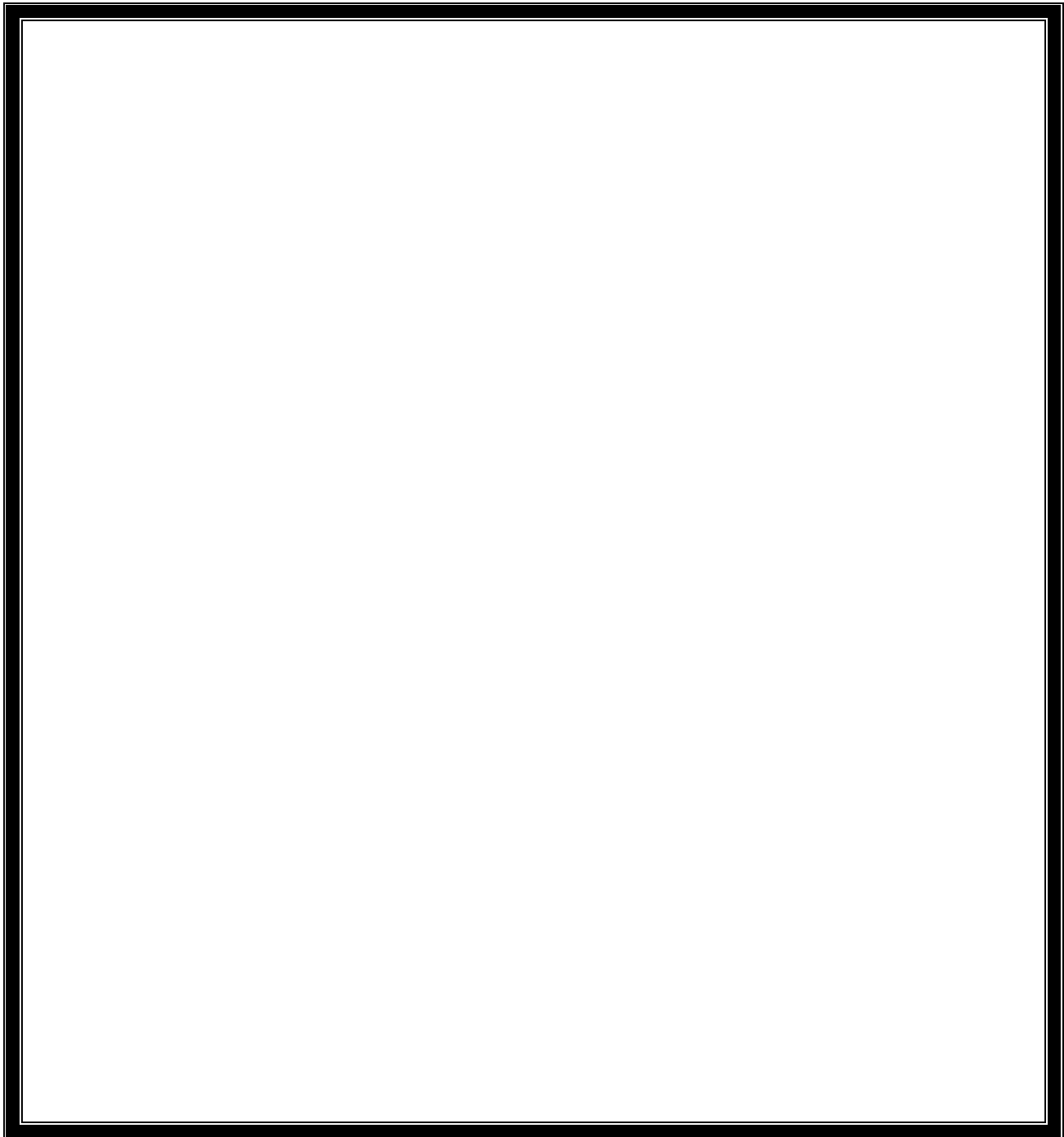
Mission Statement Rough Draft



Step 5: Complete Your Mission Statement

At the end of the week, or at your next group, write a final copy of your mission statement. Find a permanent place for it where you can easily access it. If you want, you can compose your statement here and keep this page. Some people choose to frame their statements, post on the fridge or a home bulletin board.

My Mission Statement:



Step 6: Periodically Review and Evaluate

Every month or so, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel that this mission statement represents the best within me?
- Do I feel direction, purpose, challenge and motivation when I review my statement?
- Am I living my life according to the ideas and values that are incorporated in my mission statement?

Example Mission Statements

Example 1:

My life is an adventure to savor and enjoy. I have a great purpose and destiny. In my life I will:

- Love and service family, friends and neighbors
- Have joy in serving
- Build and strengthen young people
- Seek truth
- Develop wisdom
- Teach
- Set an example
- Share
- Have health and strength
- Listen
- Be patient
- Honour my mother
- Remember who I am, where I came from and my purpose

Example 2:

My mission is to give, for giving is what I do best, and I can learn to do better. I will seek to learn, for learning is the basis for growth, and growing is the key to living. I will seek to first understand, for understanding is the key to finding value, and value is the basis for respect, decisions, and action. This should be my first act with my wife, my family and my business. I want to help influence future development of people and organizations. I want to teach my children and other to love and laugh, to learn and grow beyond their current bounds. I will build personal, business and civic relationships by giving in frequent little ways.

Example 3

To cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share
~The Dalai Lama



You Boundary Beliefs

Before you can begin to set new and improved boundaries, you need to look at what your existing beliefs about boundaries are.

A= Definitely True B = Mostly True C = Somewhat True D= Not Very True E = Hardly True, If At All

1. I have the power to make choices for myself.
A B C D E
2. I am both valuable and imperfect
A B C D E
3. I am in a lifelong process of growth
A B C D E
4. My individual significance is not lowered or raised by other's opinions of me
A B C D E
5. My life is enriched when living in interdependent relationships with cooperative and respectful people.
A B C D E
6. My life is diminished when living in interdependent relationship with uncooperative and disrespectful people.
A B C D E
7. My intrinsic, or built-in, value is neither more nor less than other's.
A B C D E
8. Certain types of contributions will be more esteemed than others in our society or circle, but this does not add to or diminish the significance of my contribution.
A B C D E
9. Others' talents are a pleasure to observe & applaud.
A B C D E
10. I value life and operate from a sense of gratitude, not entitlement.
A B C D E
11. I am able to face challenges and meet problems.
A B C D E
12. I accept and befriend myself.
A B C D E
13. I believe I contribute significantly to the good of others and the world.
A B C D E
14. It is my right and privilege to own my feelings.
A B C D E
15. Boundaries are necessary and appropriate.
A B C D E
16. Boundaries do not violate love.
A B C D E
17. Setting limits is necessary to keep relationships healthy and vital.
A B C D E
18. I am not compelled to justify a boundary with apologetic explanations.
A B C D E

You Boundary Beliefs (Continued)

Your boundaries are built on your level of friendliness you have for yourself. Using the *Beliefscape* below, you can create a visual representation of how much you treasure yourself and what areas need work.

Fill in the column above each question number to the letter you circled for that question.

Let us first look at Leon, a loving man in his forties who was ending a long term relationship when he filled out his *Beliefscape*. While Leon believed “boundaries are necessary and appropriate,” he quickly saw that he had difficulty applying them in key areas of his life because he felt selfish setting limits:

Example:

A = Definitely True																		
B = Mostly True																		
C = Somewhat True																		
D = Not very true																		
E = Hardly True																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

Now let us fill out our own *Beliefscape*:

A = Definitely True																		
B = Mostly True																		
C = Somewhat True																		
D = Not very true																		
E = Hardly True																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

The goal is to believe so strongly in your own value that your *Beliefscape* is colored in fully. This can be done. Picturing your beliefs helps you see (1) the *strength* or *depth* of your positive self view, (2) the overall *stability* of your beliefs, and (3) the *need* for your beliefs to be adjusted.

(Adapted from: Black, J. & Enns, G. (1997) *Better Boundaries: Owning and Treasuring Your Life*. Oakland, CA. Raincoast Books)



Section Three

Boundary Types: Physical Boundaries

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Understand, define and evaluate different types of boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Identify your own physical boundaries and evaluate ways of enforcing them (Skill & Evaluation)

Boundary Types

Over the next few sections, we will be looking at the following boundary types:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Spiritual
- Relational
- Emotional
- Mental
- Legal

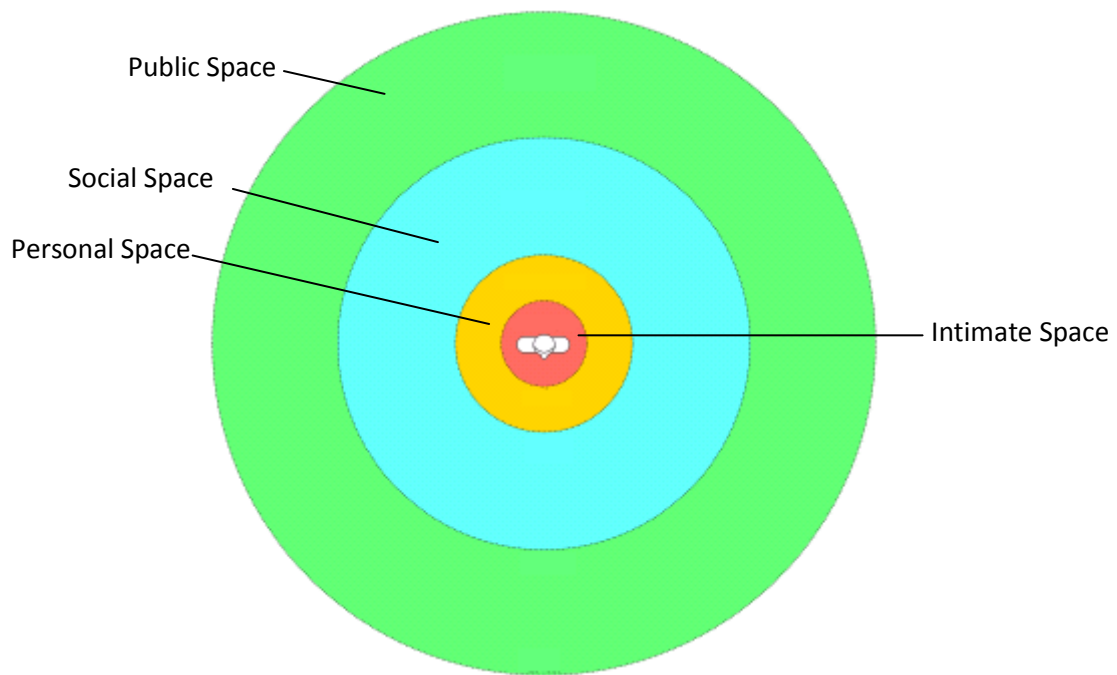
Can you and your group identify any other types of boundaries?
Are there any other areas of your life affected by boundaries? Record them in the space below.

If your group is able, you may want to come back to this page when you have completed this workbook and explore these additional boundaries types together!

Your Body

With respect to the body, boundary violations would not only include touching someone who does not want to be touched, but it also includes getting too physically close to someone when interacting with them. This is called 'intimate space.'

The diagram below shows an example of the various levels of personal space, including this person's level of intimate space:



Personal Space Activity

If your group chooses, try the following exercise to measure personal space boundaries.

1. Choose one person to lead this activity.
Get into groups of 2 – try to choose someone you do not know well.
2. Each pair stands facing each other, about 5 feet apart
3. Have person A close their eyes and stand still, while person B walks slowly and quietly towards them.
4. Have person A say 'Stop' when person he/she feels that the other person has gotten to close. They can then open their eyes.
5. Switch roles and repeat.

Questions:

What did you notice about the differences in personal space?

Did you learn anything about your own or others personal space range?

Some people may have much smaller areas of person space than our own, for example, “a close talker.” What are some ways we can clearly set our physical space boundary in a respectful way?



Section Four

Boundary Types: Sexual and Spiritual Boundaries

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Understand, define and evaluate different types of boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Identify ways of respecting other's boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Practice ways of exploring your spiritual boundaries (Skill)

Sexual Boundaries

We all use boundaries or limits in our lives in one form or another. We use boundaries to define who we are and what we are willing to do. For example, work boundaries may include maintaining a regular nine to five schedule or refusing to make coffee for bosses. When our boundaries are violated, we get frustrated and mad and may feel a loss of control.

What is a Sexual Boundary?

A sexual boundary is how far we are willing to take what we do sexually or physically. For example, some people enjoy oral sex while others do not. Sometimes our sexual boundaries might be pushed or probed, politely, by a sexual partner asking us to perform something sexually that we have never done. It is fine and healthy to inquire about a partner's sexual limits and desires. As sexual beings we have the right to say to **No** to anything.

Who Needs Boundaries?

We all need to maintain healthy sexual boundaries. No one can force their partner have sex with them. Or, a younger person may not be ready to have sex and has the right to refuse a partner. Your sexual preferences are like your preferences for flavors or aromas, they are personal and not the same for everyone.

Know Yourself

Maybe you have never thought about it but it is important to know of and be aware of your sexual limits and how to maintain them. Do not be swayed by a persuasive potential lover to do something or be something you are not. When you let your limits slip, you are reinforcing low self esteem by saying, "I'm not worth it, I'm willing to relinquish. My lover is more important than me."

When Your Limits Are Pushed

When your sexual limits are pushed, which they are likely to be, practice saying these words, "No, not really interested.", "No, not really me, maybe we can try this instead?" Be aware that any lover who continually pushes your sexual limits may not be good for you since they do not respect you enough to respect your limits.

Remember, a truly good lover is respectful to you in bed and out. So hold that line, know yourself and enjoy your sex life with the limits that you maintain.

(Adapted from: <http://www.lestout.com/article/people-relations/healthy-sexual-boundaries.html>)



Respecting Other's Limits

Respect is perhaps one of the most important characteristics or attributes to maintain, but still it is quite hard to define. It can be simply defined as the acknowledgement of the fact that someone has value. It does not matter whether the person is rich or poor, has some kind of ability or disability; everyone should be respected.

Therefore, it becomes really important to know how to control being disrespectful to people and how to deal with disrespectful behavior. This includes learning to respect other's limits and listening when they set their own boundaries.

Tips for Respecting Others:

Respect - You do not have to necessarily love everyone but try and respect them. It is the same with other people; they respect you but they might not necessarily love you. You may never actually make a great friend or a fan of everyone but you certainly do not need to be disrespectful to anybody.

Know Your Limits - You need to know your limits. You also need to know how much other people can and cannot get away with. But, you need to be sure about yourself first because if you are not sure about your limits, then you cannot just go about talking about the same to other people. You must know clearly that you will not tolerate rude behavior or abuse. Even if you are subjected to some rude behavior, you can sort it out without being disrespectful.

Support - You can also depend on your friends and family for support if you feel that you are not being able to control your rude behavior. You can even allow them to be the disciplinarian. Support from your friends and family can go a long way in solving such a problem.

Control Yourself - Do not get mad over everything, and learn to listen when others are setting their boundaries. Instead of getting mad, set your own limits and refuse to entertain people who do not respect your limits.

Promises - Remember, promises are meant to be kept and fulfilled. Never back down on your commitments and promises that you might have made. This is sure to go down in a wrong way with the other party. If you learn to keep your promises, you will automatically learn to be nice and respectful.

No Argument - Try not to argue with anyone. Instead, work out your conflicts with siblings, friends, family or partners. Alternatively, when you do get angry, count to ten and eventually you will calm down.

Be Polite - Respect others to get respect. Be polite with everyone you meet. Remember your manners at all times, especially if you want to control disrespectful behavior.

Do not Talk Back - Talking back to someone is the biggest form of disrespect. Do not talk back, roll your eyes or show any kind of negative body language. Control these behaviors and you will slowly get better.

Communication - Communication is the key to some of the biggest problems in this world. When someone or something is bothering you, talk about it. It helps to vent and work out the problems. Do not keep it inside your mind, as you never know when it can just explode. What you can also do is write down what you feel on a diary or a blog when you do not have anybody to talk to.

(Adapted from: <http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/how-to-control-being-disrespectful-2713.html>)

Spiritual Boundaries

There are a number of spiritual boundaries that are important to keeping yourself well. There is a common saying about waiting for the lightning bolt to strike us. While this will most likely not happen as a result of some spiritual punishment, the fear has been duly placed in our psyche. As a result, we need to define our Spiritual Boundaries.

Inner Spiritual Boundaries

These can be the most sinister as we ignore them or process them so strongly that our own identity lapses into nothing more than a conduit for someone else's words or beliefs.

Core Values

Most people have never defined their core values and so have difficulty understanding why they are conflicted or have chaos in their lives. This is true in life, or more specifically, in the spiritual life. As we define who we are we, must also define each area of our life to understand who we are and the boundaries we want to set for ourselves. This begins with our core values.

These core values create who we are and what we do on a daily basis. Our true identity is built by what we decide we are going to believe over a lifetime. These central beliefs shape our choices in jobs, fun and even our mate.

Central Belief System

These are the beliefs that shape our daily actions and thoughts; those thoughts that incriminate us or celebrate the life we lead. The good and bad we have done are developed in our mind by that belief system.

In order to begin examining your core values and central belief system, try writing your Personal Mission Statement from page 13. If you have already done so, examine you mission statement and see if you can identify any core values or central beliefs. Even if we no longer share or support the beliefs we grew up with, they are still able to influence our current beliefs.

Fundamental Spiritual Structure

The key to unlocking our beliefs lie in the Fundamental Spiritual Structure. This is the structure that we have grown up with and have "learned" to believe and act upon. Actions over time develop habit and belief in a certain structure. That structure creates the boundaries that protect us and creates walls that are hard to penetrate.

External Spiritual Boundaries

External Spiritual Boundaries are the ones that we most understand and are affected by until we understand the Inner Spiritual Boundaries. The external barriers are more easily seen and kept under control because they are visible to everyone. We HAVE to make a conscious effort to fit in to the crowd or make a special effort to NOT fit in based on those external boundaries.

Bad Influence

We are taught when we are young to NOT hang around bad people or bad influences. However, as we age, the boundaries from our caregivers become less restrictive and we need to establish these for ourselves. The creation of these protections becomes less guided by authority and more by our convictions. The external influences of the internet, media, Hollywood and our circle of influence are important to what we allow into our conscious and subconscious minds. They can influence us in small or large ways. As much as nutrition affects our physical health, this onslaught of material that we allow our senses to come in contact with, directly and indirectly, affect our fundamental structures mentally.

Bad Habits

As these structures are affected, we in turn create either good or bad habits. These new structures we allow to be created mold our action set. Bad habits can be formed from this external attack or our moral fiber. Forcibly (or consciously) creating those habits that will remain congruent to our core values is critical to maintaining inner-peace and combating the chaos created by NOT doing battle correctly.

What are the effects of crossing these barriers or letting them slide?

The end result of not maintaining proper boundaries is the existence of continual chaos and sometimes misdirection in our lives. Once we find ourselves off in a direction we did not plan or hope for, it can take a great deal of effort to find our place again.

What can we do to protect ourselves from these different distractions both inner and external?

1. The key is to protect our boundaries from the outset and not let yourself travel to far down any derogatory path.
2. Spaced repetition with the good information that you wish to put into your mind.
3. Daily meditation and focus on the path that you want to travel.
4. Careful consideration of those whom you choose to associate with.

These steps may help you create the spiritual freedom you want and the separation from the troublesome part of your spiritual path.



(Source: <http://youngmillionairegroup.com/blog/spiritual-boundaries-setting-boundaries-series-sbs-part-1/>)

Spiritual Meditation

Feel free to adapt this meditation so it better fits your own spiritual and/or religious practice.

Get the room or space ready for meditation. Clear away any workbooks, papers, etc. If you can, dim the lights or even light a candle. Make sure the room is as quiet as possible. Sometimes a fan or other white noise can help to block some unwanted noises.

Find a comfortable position that you can maintain for about 10 – 15 minutes. You can sit, lie down, or whatever works best for you.

If you are on your own, you can record the meditation below and play it back for yourself. You may also ask a friend or group member read aloud. Remember to speak slowly and take your time:

- Begin by breathing in deeply. Feel your abdomen expand outwards or up towards the ceiling.
- Slowly breath out all of the air in your lungs, drawing your belly button towards your spine
- Again, breathe in deeply, pushing your belly button out as far as you can.
- Breath out, pulling your belly button in as far as you can.
- Continue concentrating on your breathing, slowly in..... and slowly out..... (Pause reading for about 4-5 breaths).
- Continue breathing as you imagine walking along a path in a lovely wooded area. Pay attention to the colour of the trees, the breeze blowing gently, the sound of birds in the trees. Continue your walk, taking in the sensations of the forest around you. (Pause reading for about 4-5 breaths).
- As you travel along in the woods, you come across a clearing. In this clearing is a small dwelling. You slowly walk towards this little building in the clearing. (Pause reading for about 4-5 breaths).
- As you near the building, you notice someone sitting out front. As you approach, it becomes clear to you who is this someone.
- For all of us, this is a different person. Someone you are connected too spiritually. It may be someone you know, someone you have never met, or even someone not of this earth.
- As you approach this person, they invite you join them. You are invited to ask any questions you might have, or to have a conversation with them.
- As you continue to breathe slowly, imagine your conversation with this person, the answers to the questions you ask. (Pause reading for 3-5 minutes, longer if time allows).
- It is now time to end your talk and walk back through the woods. (Pause reading for 2-3 breaths).
- As you reach the place where you began, slowly come back to the room and open your eyes.
- Know that you can come back to this place whenever you wish to seek guidance, a spiritual moment, or relaxation.



Section Five

Boundary Types: Relationship and Legal Boundaries

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Understand, define and evaluate different types of boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Identify and evaluate relational boundaries (Knowledge & Evaluation)
- ✓ Identify and practice research skills (Knowledge & Skill)

Relational Boundaries

Relational boundaries are those that are in place for the various types of relationships that you have in your life. For example, your relationship with a bus driver you see on a regular basis is very different from the relationship you have with a best friend.

With your group or on your own, brainstorm a list of different roles and relationships in which you are involved. Try to focus on people you have regular contact with. For example, a bus driver you have noticed once vs. a bus driver you have everyday.

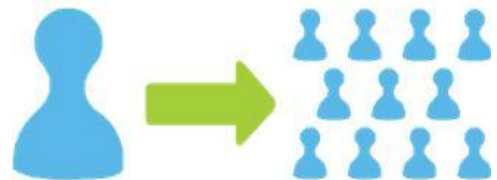
Write down your list in the space provided below.

Once your list is complete, mark relationship as following:

+ relationships you have most control over

Or

– relationships you have least control over.



Evaluating Relationship Boundaries:

Separate from the larger group into pairs or small groups.

Choose 2 or 3 roles/relationships that you have in common, or are similar from your lists on the previous page.

Answer the questions below with respect to one of these roles/relationships and discuss it with your partner/group. When everyone is finished, return to the large group and discuss what you came up with.

1. What type of relationship is this?

2. Who initiates contact?

3. What is the time frame for this relationship?
(I.e. A bus driver you see for 15 minutes, a friendship you hope to keep for a lifetime, etc.)

4. Is sharing equal in this relationship?

5. Are there things that you would like to say in this relationship, but you do not or feel that you cannot? What are they?

6. Do you feel that your own boundaries are respected in this relationship? Why or why not?

7. What changes might you like to make in this relationship?

Using Boundaries In Your Relationship – Watch Out!

Should you put your foot down in your relationship or should you try to be more flexible?

We all make boundaries in relationships and they often work well for us. We know what we can accept and will tolerate from our partners or friends. Boundaries are our self-protection and can stop us from getting hurt. However, sometimes boundaries can cause misunderstanding and breakups. What are your personal boundaries and how are they working in your relationship? How about your partner's boundaries – can you live up to them? Are your boundaries in harmony with each other?

Relationship boundaries vary dramatically from person to person and can be big or small.

Examples of **big boundaries** – would you accept a friend or partner who:

- Is having an affair
- Uses illicit drugs on a regular basis
- Abuses you,
- Hurts your children or your pets

The big boundaries are what you might not tolerate and cause your relationship to end. Then there are the smaller boundaries

Examples of **smaller boundaries**:

- Places you prefer they not go
- Do not approve of other friends
- Actions you want them to do daily
- Food you prefer they eat or not eat

Again, the smaller boundaries are there to protect you but are fear based. You fear that if your partner does step over your smaller boundaries it will lead to the bigger boundaries failing.

Not only do you have your set of boundaries, so does your partner or friend.

Unfortunately they may not all mesh with yours. Some, you may have set mutually but the rest are based on each of your fears. This conflict of boundaries not meshing usually falls within the 'smaller' more personal boundaries and often leads to relationships failing. Your partner may feel like you are trying to control them and feel that you are acting like a control freak. Perhaps they have already broken off a previous relationship for that very reason. Perhaps they are thinking of ending their relationship. Many people do not like feeling controlled by others.

An important thing to remember is that it is ok to be somewhat flexible with smaller boundaries, as long as these do not develop into larger ones.

If your partner wants to do something that may feel scary to you but falls within your smaller boundaries now is the time to talk about it. Talk with them before you put your foot down. Try to listen and understand why they want to do it. More importantly assess how you will really feel if it happened. Do you trust them enough? Are they trustworthy? Have they broken your trust in the past – maybe this caused you to have this personal boundary in the first place.

How long ago was your trust broken? Days – then maybe it will be broken again; Years – then perhaps it is time to trust again.

Our smaller boundaries may always be there but allow yourself to be flexible at times. Only if you feel it is appropriate, move your boundary line to help mesh with your partners. Try not to control your partner – find the balance that will keep you both happy.

(Adapted from: <http://nowloveme.com/using-boundaries-in-your-relationship-watch-out/>)

Legal Boundaries

When a person hears the term ‘legal boundary’, often what comes to mind are property lines – invisible lines that separate property. However, legal boundaries are about more than just property, they are about the legal restrictions that affect our lives, some even daily.

When you are walking or driving somewhere, do you stop at a red light? There is a legal boundary that says we cannot go through a red light or we risk the consequences of paying a ticket or even getting into an accident.

Not all legal boundaries are created fair and equal. For tips on how to challenge laws you do not feel are right, please check out our *Self Advocacy* workbook and *Advocacy Manual*.

Research Skills

Since different countries, provinces, cities and communities have their own set of legal boundaries, it is important to know where to find the laws that affect you. The best way to know your rights is to do your research.

- List key words to help you look up information about the topic.
- Go to an encyclopedia, internet, or other reference source, to get an overview of the topic.
- Brainstorm questions about the topic on your own or with a group
- Group questions under similar headings.
- Make a list of possible sources that can answer your questions. This can include local legal services, advocacy supports or other organizations.
- Find the sources in the library, on the computer, etc.
- Know that in Canada, most Codes, Acts, Laws, by-laws, and more are available free on the internet

Brainstorm ways to research laws and legal boundaries in your area:





Section Six

Boundary Types: Emotional and Mental Boundaries

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Understand, define and evaluate different types of boundaries (Knowledge)
- ✓ Identify and evaluate how your emotions can affect behaviors (Knowledge & Evaluation)
- ✓ Practice and demonstrate critical thinking (Skill)

Emotional Boundaries

Be true to yourself above all else. People who lack healthy emotional boundaries can be very difficult to deal with, and you should not even have to deal with them if you'd rather not. Life is short, after all, so try to spend your valuable time with people who nourish your soul rather than depleting your emotional energy.

(Source: http://www.ehow.com/print/how_4820610_avoid-lack-healthy-emotional-boundaries.html)

What are ways you can nourish yourself and protect your emotional boundaries?
You may choose to share your thoughts with the group.

Controlling Emotional Behaviors

Some emotions have received labels as good or bad. However, it is important to view all emotions as helpful. To label any as negative might steer people away from learning about feelings, as they may want to avoid something labeled negative.

Emotions that are traditionally 'negative' can warn us when a situation is headed in a direction that may not be the best choice for us, and can motivate us to make changes.

Despite knowing that all emotions are helpful, there are times when it is in your own best interest to control your emotional behavior; releasing them in a different way or at a different time and place. For example, shouting, yelling and swearing at your work or volunteer supervisor may lead you to being fired or asked to leave, even if your reason for feeling angry is justified. Controlling emotional behaviors can also be important for times when you are feeling something traditionally thought of as positive. For example, you are very excited about something, but your friend is very upset about something else.

Here are some ways you can begin to gain better control over your emotional behaviors.

- **Recognize that you are having an emotional response**
By taking the time to reflect on your feelings and where they are coming from, you can become more aware of your responses to the world around. For example, you may know someone else is correct; however feeling embarrassed or hurt could lead you to deny that they might be right.
You may want to keep a feelings journal for a few weeks in order to better understand your emotional responses in different situations (see page 40).
- **Understand what the emotional response is**
Once you are better able to identify what your emotional responses are, you can begin to look at different situations and try to understand why you reacted that way. For example, maybe you did not want to admit that the other is correct because you think they believe themselves to be better than you.
- **Accept your emotional responses** (rather than reject them or react to them with fear)
We have emotions for a reason, so you should not want to get rid of them completely. Emotions help us decide what we should stay away from and what we should approach. Emotions also help us keep lasting relationships with other people. Without emotions, we might make terrible decisions! Therefore, accepting emotions is helpful, because when we listen to our emotions, we can actually learn important information.

- **Access strategies that allow you to reduce the intensity of the emotion when needed**

With your group, identify some strategies you could use or that have been helpful in the past (Example – when you are angry, take a deep breath and count to 10).

- **Engage in goal-directed behavior when upset**

Instead of focusing on why you are upset, it can be helpful to focus on something else for a time. Doing this will allow you some space from your emotions, and time to process the thoughts causing the emotion. Once you have had time to get into a different frame of mind the situation may look differently

(Source: Learn Healthy Emotion Regulation Skills to Reduce Emotional Instability
By Kristalyn Salters-Pedneault, PhD.)



Feelings Journal

Start by finding yourself a nice notebook, or making your own with lined paper and a decorative cover.

Everyday, or as often as you can, try some of the suggestions below to explore your feelings, emotional responses and where these come from:

Feelings Obstacles

In your journal identify what obstacles currently keep you out of touch with your feelings. For example:

- Non-feeling personality style – these individuals may think of themselves as high performance machines who are very productive but without feeling.
- Pulling-in personality style – this is a withdrawal pattern in which individuals choose to keep a low profile or act invisible to keep their emotions in order and avoid conflict or other troublesome situations.
- Disassociation – this occurs when one becomes numb or disconnected from the emotions that make one uncomfortable or feel challenged.

Once you decide the obstacles, describe some specific events from your past where you used these styles of behavior and how they helped you survive those events. Then, looking at your current life, describe for yourself how these survival techniques are no longer productive for you.

Self Messages

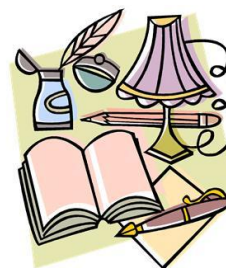
In your journal, explore the messages you have given yourself in the past that have kept you from identifying, experiencing or expressing your feelings.

For example: “If I ignore my feelings, they will just go away,” “Feelings will only hold me back.”

Self Affirmations

Once you have identified the messages that have prevented you from being in touch with your feelings, journal positive self affirmations that oppose each of the messages from your past. Use these affirmations on a daily basis to help you identify, experience and express your feelings.

For example, in the past you may have told yourself “I am not important, my feelings don’t matter.” Replace that message with “Everyone is important and knowing my feelings will help me live a fuller life.”



Feelings Log

1. On a daily basis for the next thirty days, record feelings you are experiencing. Separate your daily journal into different parts of your day. You may want to make a template and photocopy it. For example:
 - Morning-rising and breakfast
 - Morning-at work (school, home, volunteer)
 - Afternoon-lunch
 - Afternoon-back at job (school, home, volunteer)
 - Early evening-on way home
 - Evening-dinner
 - Later evening
 - Pre-going to bed
2. For each part of the day, identify the following:
 - What I was feeling?
 - What thought or stimulus brought on that feeling?
 - What, if anything, did I do as a result of this feeling?
 - How did others react to my behavior?

To help you identify the feelings experienced, use the list of feeling words below, and add onto it if you choose. You can also use these words to try to identify how others around you might be feeling:

Abandoned, absorbed, abused, aching, admired, affection, afflicted, agonized, agreeable, alien, alienated, altruistic, amiable, anguished, belittled, benevolent, benign, big-hearted, brotherly, bullied, caring, charitable, comforting, compassionate, concern, congenial, conscientious, considerate, cooperative, cordial, depressed, despised, despondent, diminished, disliked, displeased, dissatisfied, doubtful, embarrassed, flimsy, fuming, honest, horrible, humiliated, impatient, imprisoned, injured, interest, irritated, love, pathetic, pitiful, ridiculed, sad, shaky, shocked, skeptical, speechless, strained, worrying.

3. Repeat. If after 30 days of keeping a "Feelings Log" you do not feel confident with your feelings or if you feel you would like to explore your feelings more, return to Step 1 and begin again. Wanting to improve further and attempt a task again is never a sign of failure, only of determination.

Emotional Boundary Setting

Once you begin to feel more confident in your ability to identify, experience and express your feelings, you can work towards improving your emotional boundaries.

When we feel upset, embarrassed or uncomfortable with a person's behavior, our emotions alert us. If we learn to trust our emotions and feel confident expressing ourselves we can let the person know how we feel as soon as we are aware of our feeling. This will help us set our boundaries which are necessary to protect our physical and mental health.

Think about a situation in the past or present which left you feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable. In your journal, write about how you would express yourself in order to set your boundary.

(Adapted from: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/14723-getting-in-touch-with-feelings/>)

Mental Boundaries

Mental boundaries define our thoughts and opinions, allowing us to choose what we think about and to stop ourselves from thinking about other things. Additionally, as we form opinions, we have freedom in how we analyze a situation, what information we integrate into this assessment, and what our resulting opinion will be.

Regardless of whether or not someone agrees with our opinion, it is ours to have and creates a distinction between us and someone else in our lives. Maintaining your own opinion or value about something is one of the components that make you a unique and distinct person.

For some people, rigid mental boundaries can prevent a person from growing and learning. We live in a world where we are always given opportunities to learn and try new things that allow us to grow and become better people. However, if we are stuck in our ways, our mental boundaries can hold us back.

It is important to keep out the opinions and thoughts of others that do not relate to our core values, while at the same time, allowing some new thoughts in through critical thinking.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking, and being able to think clearly and rationally.

Critical thinking does not mean being argumentative or being critical of others. Critical thinking skills can be used in exposing fallacies and bad reasoning, and can also be used to support other viewpoints, to cooperate with others in solving problems and acquiring knowledge.

(Source: Lau, J. *A Mini Guide to Critical Thinking*. University of Hong Kong. March 2009)

Critical thinking is a skill that people develop as they grow and learn. This skill becomes more important as we get older and are exposed to more and more variety in the world. Some people have difficulty with critical thinking because it requires a person to set aside assumptions and beliefs to think without bias or judgment. This can be very difficult to do.

Critical thinking involves suspending your beliefs to explore and question topics from a "blank slate" point of view. It also involves the ability to know fact from opinion when exploring a topic.

"Before the day begins, you are not yet engaged in any physical activities. And it is only physically that you are constrained by the limits of time and place; mentally, there are no such boundaries."

~Menachem Mendel Schneerson

Critical Thinking Practice

These exercises are designed to help you develop and practice critical thinking skills.

Critical Thinking Exercise 1: Tour Guide for an Alien

Pretend that you have been assigned the task of conducting a tour for aliens who are visiting earth and observing human life.

You are riding along in a hot air balloon, and you float over a professional baseball stadium. One of the aliens looks down and becomes very confused, so you tell him that there is a game going on.

On your own or with your group, try to answer the following questions for your alien friend.

1. What is a game?
2. Why are there no female players?
3. Why do people get so passionate watching other people play games?
4. What is a team?
5. Why is it that the people in the seats cannot just go down on the field and join in?

If you try to answer these questions fully, it will likely become apparent that we carry around certain assumptions and values. We support a certain team, for instance, because it makes us feel like we are a part of a community. This sense of community is a value that matters to some people more than others. Furthermore, when trying to explain team sports to an alien, you have to explain the value we put on winning and losing.

When you think like an alien tour guide, you are forced to take a deeper look at the things we do and things we value. They do not always sound so logical and true from the outside looking in!



Critical Thinking Exercise 2: Fact or Fiction

Do you always know fact from opinion? It is not so easy to do sometimes. Recent developments in the media have made it easy for groups with political agendas to masquerade as impartial sources, and for web sites to offer false information as true. All this makes it more important than ever for us to develop critical thinking. You must use trustworthy sources to form your opinions and base your decisions on.

If you *do not* learn the difference between fact and fiction, you will get stuck reading and watching things that only reinforce beliefs and assumptions you already own. That is the opposite of learning and expanding your boundaries!

Try to determine whether each statement sounds like a fact or an opinion, and discuss with the group:

- My mom is the best mom on earth.
- My telephone number is difficult to memorize.
- The deepest part of the ocean is 35,813 feet deep.
- Dogs make better pets than turtles.
- Medication is the only treatment for mental health conditions.
- Smoking is bad for your health.
- Eighty-five percent of all cases of lung cancer in the U.S. are caused by smoking.
- The doctor is always right
- Slinky toys are fun.
- Two out of ten people are boring.

You will probably find some of the statements easy to judge, but other statements difficult. If you can debate the truthfulness of a statement with your group, then it is probably an opinion!

(Adapted from: <http://homeworktips.about.com/od/paperassignments/a/Critical-Thinking-Exercises.htm>)

Pushing Mental Boundaries, By Dean Coulson



How often do you really go for something? I mean really put yourself out there achieve your goals? How far do you go and keep going until you achieve it?

Maybe it is furthering your education, getting a promotion at work, or reaching a personal best at the gym.

Comfort zones

To get anywhere in this life, you have to want to go beyond your comfort zone. Too many people in this world plod along mindlessly, too afraid to do anything about their dreams. A lot of the time these people listen too much to what others say, and in doing so, they keep themselves back. Other people may not have the courage to try it themselves, and instead, keeping others down at their level.

Do not let anybody do this to you, no matter who it is! Move forward and get uncomfortable. When this is achieved, you are going to have to do it again and again, constantly being in an “uncomfortable state.” This is how we grow, and push our boundaries in our lives so that we can enrich them.

What holds us back?

Fear, Doubt, apprehension – that uncomfortable feeling in the pit of our stomach, the anxiety that makes us feel sick and makes us doubt what we are doing, sometimes, before you even start.

What you have to remember is that fear is just an emotion, it does not hold substance. It can be overridden.

Do it anyway!

Do what you want to do regardless of how you feel and you can achieve great things. You will eventually become desensitized to its affects.

That is until the next new thing you want to do, and then the cycle repeats. However, the more you tackle these feelings, the more used to it you will be and you will be better equipped in the future to deal with them.

Realize your Potential!

Too many people are stopped in their tracks by fear and never realize their dreams. What I am saying here is realize your potential and go for it. **DO NOT** let anything hold you back; believe in yourself, keep pushing your boundaries and you will get to where you want to be.

Eliminate Fear

Remember, the key is in handling this emotion. If you are not careful fear can devour you, and completely paralyze you by its effects. Try to not let your fear do this to you. The sick feeling, the shaking, the dry mouth, the tunnel vision, it is the affect of adrenaline, the need for flight or fight, that has all been built to protect us for thousands of years. However, in modern, society it can be a completely misplaced ideal.

Remember it is only adrenaline, a reaction to a stimulus, a by product of feeling anxious or stressed. Do not let it control you; understand it and you can master your fear to harness it for your own gains.

Fear is the friend of exceptional people, get used to it and utilize it!



(Source: <http://www.allroundathlete.com/2010/04/pushing-mental-boundaries/>)

What are some areas in your life you would like to try to push your boundaries?

What are some areas in your life for which it might not be healthy to push the boundaries?



Section Seven

Understanding and Setting Boundaries

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Identify and evaluate different ways your boundaries have been set (Knowledge & Evaluation)
- ✓ Explore and practice ways you can begin to set or strengthen your boundaries (Knowledge, Attitude & Skill)

3 Ways of Boundaries

All boundaries, including the types we have listed, can be set in one of 3 ways – Permeable, Semi-permeable and Rigid.

Permeable Boundaries

An example of a physical permeable boundary is a line drawn in the sand. You can see there is a boundary there, but there is really nothing to stop you from crossing it. Sometimes, a wave comes in and easily washes the boundary away.

In terms of emotional and less physical boundaries, we can think of things that overtake us and keep us from thinking and responding. We allow everyone to come into our lives without taking into consideration if they are safe, we trust too easily.

For most of us, having overly permeable boundaries will allow unwanted emotional and mental assault from others we need protection from. Also, permeable boundaries may mean we let too much of ourselves out, limiting our level of privacy and sense of self.



Rigid Boundaries

An example of a rigid boundary is a brick wall – it cannot be moved without a great deal of force. A person with rigid boundaries is closed off so nobody can cross their boundaries. Often, people with overly rigid boundaries do not allow others to get close to them emotionally or physically. Rigid boundaries do not allow us to be open to new thoughts or ideas and can often keep us in the dark.



Semi-permeable/Flexible Boundaries

Flexible boundaries are firm and clear. They are open enough to allow new ideas, thoughts, and resources to enter when needed, but also sufficiently closed to protect us from harm. Ideally, the closedness is neither overbearing nor intrusive – but comfortable and protective.

Think of a sieve, it allows small, safer items through while keeping larger, unwanted items out.



3 Ways of Boundaries – Activity

For three of the boundary types we have explored in the previous sections or others important to you, identify whether your enforcement of those boundaries is Permeable, Rigid or Semi-Permeable. Then examine how healthy and appropriate how you set your boundaries is for you. You may choose to do this activity in small groups or pairs.

Boundary Types:

Physical, Sexual, Spiritual, Relational, Emotional, Mental, Legal. Other: _____.

1. _____

- Permeable
- Rigid
- Semi-Permeable

How healthy/appropriate has this been for you?

2. _____

- Permeable
- Rigid
- Semi-Permeable

How healthy/appropriate has this been for you?

3. _____

- Permeable
- Rigid
- Semi-Permeable

How healthy/appropriate has this been for you?

Ten Laws of Boundaries:

Law #1: The Law of Cause and Effect

If you smoke, you are likely to develop a smokers cough or even cancer. If you overspend, you will likely get calls from creditors, or worse, may not have money for rent or food. If you exercise regularly, you may have fewer colds and more energy. Establishing boundaries helps an individual learn the law of cause and effect and how to protect themselves in the future.

Sometimes, someone else may step in and pay that credit card bill or deliver groceries. Though this may be done with the best intentions, crossing this boundary may take ones ability to learn and grow. We must all learn to reap what we have sown on our own.

Law #2: The Law of Responsibility

Setting boundaries and being responsible for ones own life is very important. It is not selfish to want to set boundaries and be the best you. However, it is important to continue to love others while also taking care of ourselves.

We cannot feel another's feelings for them, grow for them, or learn for them – but we can support and care for others, and allow them to do the same for us.

Law #3: The Law of Power

You have the power to admit when you need to make a change, without necessarily having the ability to change it yet.

You have the power to ask for help. You can call a family member, friend, peer support, doctor, counselor or anyone else that you trust to help you when you need it.

You have the power to make the choices that are most positive for you and your life.

You have the power to set and enforce new and improved boundaries

Law #4: The Law of Respect

When setting and enforcing boundaries, we fear others will not respect our boundaries; "They will get angry if I set limits," "They won't accept me if I say no." We may even judge others' boundaries, thinking we know what is best.

If we love and respect others who tell us no, they will then love and respect our no. Our concern should not be what others would do or what we want them to do; they are free to make their own choices.

Law #5: The Law of Motivation

If what you are doing is taking away more than you are getting back, you are doomed to failure. Some people are motivated to do things for less healthy reasons:

- Fear of loss of love, or abandonment
- Fear of others' anger
- Fear of loneliness
- Guilt
- Payback
- Approval
- Over identification with another's loss or hardship

Law #6: The Law of Evaluation

It is important to evaluate the effects of setting boundaries and be responsible to the other person, but that does not mean you should avoid setting a boundary that might hurt or anger someone else. To have boundaries is to have a purposeful life. Sometimes our actions may hurt another, as long as we are not harming them. For example, it may hurt while you are receiving treatment from the dentist but in the long run, the dentist helps, not harms.

We need to evaluate the pain our new boundaries cause other people. We need to see that this hurt may possibly be helpful, and sometimes, a great thing we can do for the relationship.

Law #7: The Law of Proactivity

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. When working towards boundary changes, it is not uncommon for some people to become very reactive: pent-up rage explodes into strong attempts to reclaim power that was lost in the past.

These reactive phases are necessary, but not sufficient for the establishment of healthy boundaries. You may need to react to find your own boundaries, but once you have found them, it is time to strengthen connections with others as equals.

Law #8: The Law of Envy

Envy defines 'good' as 'what I do not have,' and hates the other that has it. We all have envious parts to our personalities, but it becomes destructive when it keeps us perpetually insatiable and dissatisfied. It is difficult to decide what we want and need when we are focused on others.

People without boundaries feel empty and unfulfilled. The time and energy they spend looking at other people could be used to take responsibility and do something about it.

Law #9: The Law of Activity

An important part of boundary setting is being active and doing the work. It may be hard at times, but without resistance, we cannot gain strength. Think of the example of a bird hatching from an egg. If we break the egg for the bird, it will die. The bird needs to peck its own way of the egg, into the world.

Law #10: The Law of Exposure

A personal boundary like is a property line: It defines where you begin and end. Your boundaries define your relation to others. In order for others to honor your boundaries, they need to be made visible and communicated with others. The path to real love is to communicate your boundaries openly.

(Adapted from: Cloud, D. & Townsend, J. *Boundaries*. 1992. Zondervan.)



Begin to Set Personal Boundaries

Creating and maintaining personal boundaries is one way we can improve our lives. This section will show you how to stand up for yourself, set personal boundaries, and free yourself from the “disease to please” with these 3 Steps.

Step 1: Self Awareness

The first step to set boundaries is self-awareness. Pay attention to the situations when you are low on energy, feel butterflies in your stomach, or want to cry. Identifying where you need more space, self-respect, energy or personal power is the first step.

Another way to identify your boundaries is by completing these following sentences with at least 10 examples. Feel free to use another page if you need more space.

1. People may not _____.

Examples: ...Humiliate me in front of others; Criticize me; go through my personal things.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1) | 6) |
| 2) | 7) |
| 3) | 8) |
| 4) | 9) |
| 5) | 10) |

2. I have the right to ask for _____.

Examples: ...Privacy; More information about medication before taking it; Support.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1) | 6) |
| 2) | 7) |
| 3) | 8) |
| 4) | 9) |
| 5) | 10) |

3. To protect my time and energy, it is ok to _____.

Examples: ...Change my mind; Turn the ringer off on my phone; Say No.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1) | 6) |
| 2) | 7) |
| 3) | 8) |
| 4) | 9) |
| 5) | 10) |

Step 2: Setting Your Boundaries

Start setting simple but firm boundaries with a graceful or neutral tone. This will feel uncomfortable at first, but as you take care of yourself, the personal power you gain will make it easier.

1. Be sure to have support in place before and after each conversation. If you cannot find support from a friend or family member, you may be able to find a friend online or call a local distress centre.
2. Vent any strong emotions with your partner or other supports *before* having your boundary conversation.
3. Use simple and direct language.
Examples:
 - *To set a boundary with an angry person:*
"You may not yell at me. If you continue, I'll have to leave the room."
 - *To set a boundary with personal phone calls at work:*
"I've decided to take all personal calls in the evening in order to get my work done. I will need to call you later."
 - *To say no to extra commitments:*
"Although this organization is important to me, I need to decline your request for volunteer help in order to honor my family's needs."
 - *To set a boundary with someone who is critical:*
"It's not okay with me that you comment on my weight. I'd like to ask you to stop."
 - *To buy yourself time when making tough decisions:*
"I'll have to sleep on it; I have a policy of not making decisions right away."
 - *To back out of a commitment:*
"I know I agreed to head up our fundraising efforts, but after reviewing my schedule, I now realize that I won't be able to give it my best attention. I'd like to help find a replacement by the end of next week."
 - *To set a boundary with an adult child who borrows money:*
"I won't be lending you money anymore. I love you and you need to take responsibility for yourself."
4. When setting boundaries, there is no need to defend, debate, or over-explain your feelings. Be firm, gracious and direct. When faced with resistance, repeat your statement or request.
5. Back up your boundary with action. Stay strong. If you give in, you invite people to ignore your needs

Step 3: Strengthen Your Internal Boundaries

One of the reasons that people take things personally is because they have weak "internal boundaries." An internal boundary is like an invisible shield that prevents you from taking in a comment without checking it out first. For example, when someone accuses you of being arrogant, stop and consider the statement *before* taking it in.

When you use this internal shield, especially with difficult people like an ex-spouse or critical parent, it gives you time to ask yourself the following three questions:

- How much of this is true about me?
- How much of this is about the other person?
- What do I need to do (if anything) to regain my personal power or stand up for myself?

This last question is very important. Too often people neglect to stand up for themselves by avoiding confrontation and end up weakening their internal shield, making it harder to set boundaries at all. So, if someone offends you, it may be necessary to let them know in order to protect and strengthen your internal boundaries.

(Source: http://www.oprah.com/spirit/Begin-to-Set-Personal-Boundaries_1/1)



Practicing Boundary Setting

For each situation below, practice what you would say to assertively set a new boundary or to enforce an existing one. You may choose to cut the scenarios out and have each person choose one at random.

Remember, treating others with respect will earn you more respect in return.

- You have a friend who shows up at your apartment without being invited. She always assumes that you have time and want to spend an evening with her watching TV. Tonight, you do not want her around.
- Your friend goes right for your refrigerator whenever he comes to your place. He takes anything he wants and starts eating it. You are on a tight budget and cannot afford to always feed your friends. You really wish he would ask before helping himself to your food.
- Your support worker really wants you to go to a group that is being held in the community. You are unsure about what the group is about and want more information before deciding, but you feel you are being pressured into attending the group.
- Your friend regularly calls you late at night when you are already in bed. You want them to stop calling so late.
- Your landlord frequently shows up at your apartment without notice with a task she feels needs to be done immediately. You know that she needs to give 24 hours notice, and you know that your rights deserve to be respected.
- One of your friends keeps using the word "schizo" to talk about odd behaviors of his cat. You are offended by this word and want him to stop using it.
- You are at the doctor's office. He/she informs you that they would like you to try a new medication for your mental health issue. You do not think you need a different medication.
- You are out to lunch with a friend. At the end, your friend says "Oh, sorry, but I'm broke. You can pay for my lunch, right?" You do not want to pay for their lunch and are angry that he/she assumed you would.
- You are unable to get a hold of your ODSP worker. You have some serious questions to ask in regards to receiving an inheritance and you are having difficulty getting an answer. What do you say to the receptionist on the other end of the phone?
- You are on the bus and the stranger next to you is asking you some very personal questions you do not want to answer.
- You are feeling very depressed and overwhelmed lately, and your friend is also. Your friend keeps talking about how much worse his/her depression is than yours and does not give you a chance to share your concerns. You feel hurt by this.



Section Eight

Overcoming Boundary Challenges

Learning Outcome

Completion of this section will enable you to:

- ✓ Identify ways your boundaries might be challenges (Knowledge)
- ✓ Practice tools to maintain your boundaries (Skill)

Boundary Challenges

Here are some things that may add difficulty to your choices to set and strengthen your boundaries. If you are aware that some of the challenges may occur, you can be better prepared to reinforce your boundaries during challenging times.

Life Shifts

- Things are always moving, changing and needing adjustments. New lines need to be drawn, old ones removed.

Disagreements

- Not all people in your life will agree with where you have drawn your boundaries. It is necessary for healthy relationships to discuss and learn to respect each other boundaries.

Misunderstandings can occur when:

- Others have weak boundaries and therefore cannot respect yours.
- You have not adequately paved the way for a new boundary through respectful notification and discussion.
- Others only support your growth if they do not have to make adjustments.

Excuses

- "I just live day to day and trust things will work out."
- "It is easier to say 'yes' than 'no'."
- "If I set boundaries, I might as well kiss that relationship/job/friend/opportunity goodbye."

Your Own Patterns/Beliefs

- Your patterns have been adopted to protect you in times of discomfort and continue when that time has passed. Building boundaries is a process. Free yourself from blocks to personal power.

Fear

- Change can be scary. Fear can alert you to potential threats and danger. Feel the fear, listen to its message. Act on it if necessary, or go around it.

Ignorance

- Knowledge is power, so fight ignorance by educating yourself and improving your level of understanding.

Facing the Challenge

- By facing and beating a challenge, you are better prepared for future challenges and have reaped the reward of achievement.

(Adapted from: Black, J. & Enns, G. (1997) *Better Boundaries: Owning and Treasuring Your Life*. Oakland, CA. Raincoast Books)

Boundary Challenges

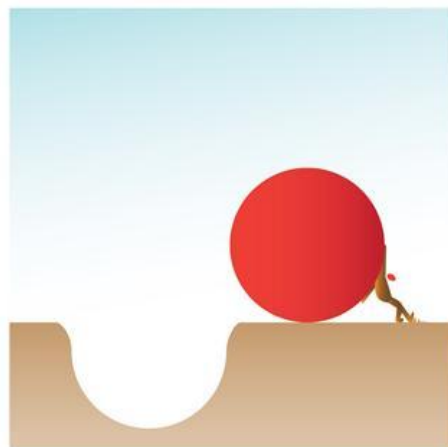
With your group, brainstorm other ways that your boundaries may be or have been challenged. You may choose to identify this generally or related to specific boundary types: Physical, Sexual, Spiritual, Relational, Emotional, Mental, Legal. Other: _____.

Examples:

- ✓ Not wanting to hurt others feelings.
- ✓ Your friend says “But you did that for me before.”
- ✓ People continue to enter your room or office without your permission.

For a few items from you list above, discuss ways you can respectfully enforce and strengthen the boundary that has been challenged. Role playing these with your group may help you feel more confident in maintaining your personal boundaries.

Once you have explored the tools on the next page, you may wish to return to your boundary challenge list and look at different ways to enforce your boundaries.



Tools to Enforce Your Boundaries

- 1) Clear Agreements with People
 - “Now, I want to be clear about what each of us can expect from this agreement...”
 - “We will meet at the centre at 3 pm sharp?”
- 2) Confident Knowledge of Yourself
 - “No, that is not my style.”
 - “I need more structure than that, can we compromise?”
- 3) Commitment to Your Goals
 - “I’m sorry, that just does not fit with the direction I’ve chosen.”
 - “I’ve committed to using my lunch hour for personal development 3 times a week, but I’d be happy to have lunch with you every other Tuesday.”
- 4) An Air of Ownership
 - Appearance that says you are authentic and know what is appropriate
 - Confidence in your role and contribution.
 - Spirit of enthusiasm and adventure.
 - A calm ‘knowing.’
- 5) Speak Up
 - “No, I will not accept your behavior.”
 - “I need to let you know that your actions and words hurt me.”
- 6) Suspend Privileges
 - “I will not continue this arrangement!”
 - “Let’s step back and resume when we have adjusted our behavior.”
- 7) Withdraw
 - Withdraw emotionally to keep your objectivity.
 - Retreat and start fresh if the situation calls for it.
- 8) Denounce
 - “You are no longer welcome here.”
 - When appropriate, refuse to speak about it, or hang up the phone. If needed, call for help, hire an attorney, consult an advocacy support, or get a restraining order.

Tools to Enforce Your Boundaries (Continued)

For each of the examples below, discuss with your group ways the *Tools to Enforce Your Boundaries* from the previous page or other ways that might be beneficial:

- Your neighbor has a very cute dog, but they keep allowing it to go to the washroom on your lawn.
- A coworker or co-volunteer frequently compliments you in way that makes you feel uncomfortable (i.e. you already have a significant other, or the compliments are of an inappropriate nature).
- A family member insists on sitting in on your doctors appointments and you would prefer to speak to your doctor alone.
- You are late for the third appointment this week.
- Can you think of other examples of situations where boundaries need to be enforced?



Back Ups to Help You Stick to Your Boundaries

1. Promises to Yourself

- “When I reach a certain point of exhaustion/stress, I will stop, identify the problem and/or get the rest and help I need.”
- “When I am rejected, I will feel the discomfort, sort through my part, if any, accept current circumstances, learn and move on.”

2. On-Call Help

- Confidante: Someone who will let you vent and keep it confidential.
- Mentor: Someone you admire and trust to encourage, teach and guide you.
- Helping Team: friends and family who will be there for you and help you when you need.

3. Personal Power Sources

- Physical: Sleep, exercise, nutrition, etc.
- Spiritual: meditation, affirmations, prayer, etc.
- Emotional: getting feelings out in a way that is safe for you and others.
- Mental: thinking about something else for a while, giving your mind a break.



For each of the ways to help you maintain your boundaries, fill in what you are already doing or what you can start doing to help you stick with your own boundaries. You may choose to post this on your fridge or mirror, or keep a copy in your wallet.

1. Promises to Yourself

-
-

2. On-Call Help

- Confidante: _____
- Mentor: _____
- Helping _____

3. Personal Power Sources

- Physical: _____
- Spiritual: _____
- Emotional: _____
- Mental: _____

Workshop Evaluation*

By filling out this page, we can learn what you found to be most helpful about this workbook and what areas of the workbook could use more development.

What did you find most useful about the Building Better Boundaries workbook?

Were the groups facilitated in a way that was suitable to you? Please explain.

Was there anything you were hoping to learn from the workshop that was not discussed?

*For internal use only