

# BOUNDARIES

*(Recommended reading – ‘Boundaries’ by Dr Cloud & Dr Townsend)*

The purpose of a boundary is to make clear separation between different turfs.

Boundaries define limits and mark off dividing lines. So what is your boundary? Your skin is a boundary, it marks off the physical you.

Apart from physical, we have other boundaries as well; psychological, spiritual and emotional. Within these borders is your identity.

**1. Boundaries are invisible fences of love.**

**2. Rules of engagement in relationships.**

**3. Principles of love that drive our relationships.**

Setting boundaries is a necessary step in being a friend to yourself. This is part of the self-care and self-love and self-respect that we all need to learn. Many of us have heard the spiritual principle, ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself’.

These 2 aspects of the principle are essential to develop this healthy balance of loving ourselves and others at the same time, **AS THEY ARE INSEPARABLE....**

If we believe other people are a unique masterpiece, (as we have already established in the needs module), then it automatically means that we are a unique masterpiece too. Either we all are, or none of us are, because we are all human beings.

The opposite is just as true, if we see ourselves as a masterpiece, then we need to be consistent with philosophical reason and accept that other people are a unique masterpiece too. Either we all are, or none of us are, because we are all human beings.

## **How to communicate boundaries:**

It is vital to honour and respect ourselves with boundaries that let other people know that we deserve and demand respect.

We need to be able to tell people when they are acting in ways that are not acceptable to us. We have the right and also the duty, to take responsibility for how **WE ALLOW** others to treat us.

What are some examples of boundaries? Firstly, our physical body had skin as a boundary, and we are responsible for our own health. (The module on Optimal Health will explain the relationship between the body and the mind).

**Our attitudes** - opinions and positions toward, or about something; these form the structure of our personality and are our responsibility.

**Our feelings** - we are responsible for what we choose to feel and why. These are signals of our own state of being, they tell us what matters, what is going well, or not so well.

**Our behaviour** - we are responsible for the way we act and conduct ourselves. To own our own behaviour, to admit it, to recognise it, to acknowledge it, to take full responsibility is a demonstration of knowing our own personal boundaries.

***Stephen Covey quotes a famous principle in his book;  
'7 Habits of Highly Effective People'...***

***Between stimulus and response is the gap for us to choose.***

Our boundaries allow us to know who we are in relation to others.

Mature relationships depend on the foundation of a clear identity and appreciation for our own uniqueness and specialness as an individual.

Setting personal boundaries is a vital part of healthy relationships. The module on communication skills and conflict resolution relies on us having healthy boundaries towards ourselves and others.

In our day-to-day lives, we observe boundaries. We do not let ourselves into other people's houses. We stop at red lights etc

We do not read another person's mail, even if we live in the same house.

We do not take things that do not belong to us.

Some boundaries are rigid - and need to be.

Boundaries such as; "it's not acceptable to hit me, ever."

"it's not acceptable to call me certain names".

"it's not acceptable to cheat on me."

No one deserves to be treated abusively, lied to, or betrayed.

Members of the addict's family can become so used to being controlled or manipulated, conned or lied to, that they don't know how to stop.

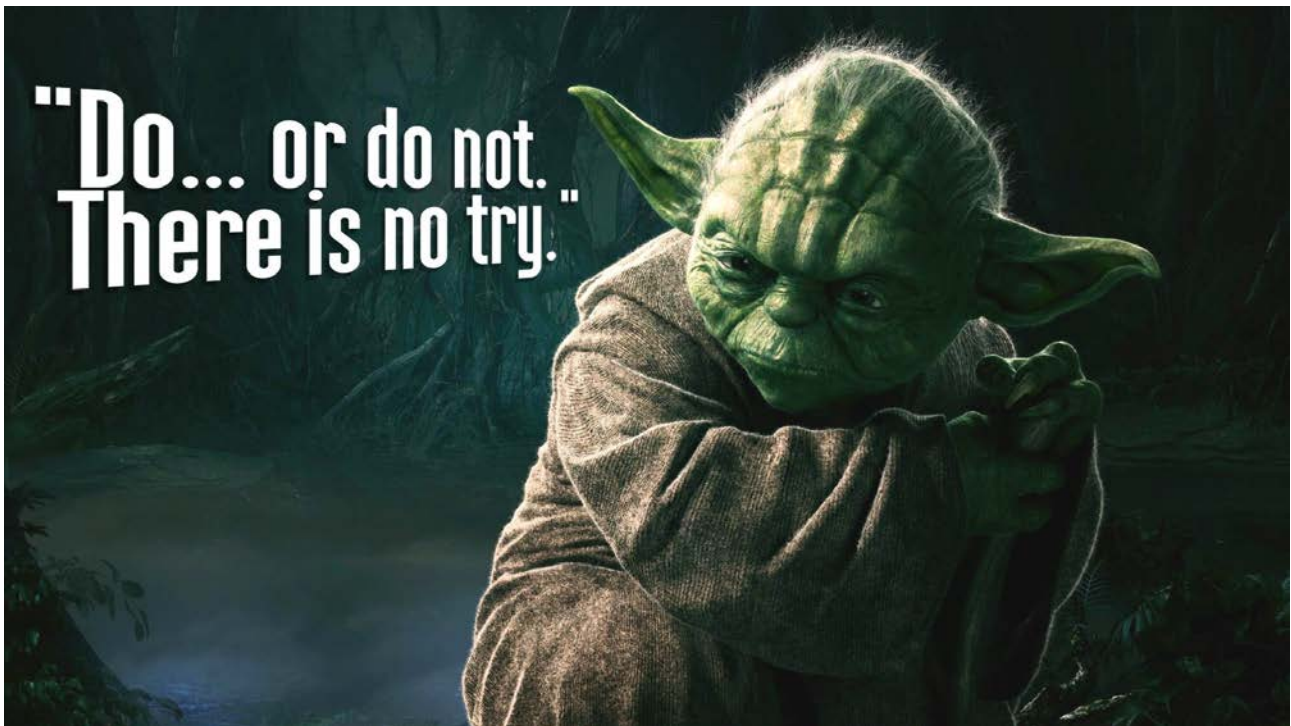
Often, it is only when they are pushed to the limit that it becomes necessary to look at boundaries, and give themselves permission to set limits they desperately need.

Learning to set boundaries, is vital in letting others know that we have worth. It also communicates through our actions, that they have worth too.

## CHOICES

Choices are the foundation upon which boundaries are built.

Choices have two directions. Yes or No. We can choose to do something or choose to not do it. Even not making a choice is still making a choice...



There are certain things in life over which we have no control, but we always have a choice about how to respond to these things.

As stated above;

*Stephen Covey quotes a famous principle in his book;  
'7 Habits of Highly Effective People'...*

***Between stimulus and response is the gap for us to choose.***

Only you can know what feels right for you and what you feel comfortable with.

Therefore, only you can be responsible for setting your boundaries.

By clearly expressing your feelings you let others know "where they stand".

There are basically three parts to a boundary.

The first two are setting the boundary;

"If you..."

The third is what we do to protect the boundary.

"I will..."

Eg: "If you abuse me by calling me names like stupid or idiot, I will leave the room/house. If you continue to call me names, I will consider it to mean that you do not deserve my friendship and I will not have contact with you one month".

"If you keep repeating this behaviour, I will start considering all of my options, including leaving this relationship".

It is very important to set consequences that we are willing to enforce.

**Do not state that you will do something that you are not ready to do!**

Setting a boundary is not making a threat - it is communicating clearly what the consequences will be if the other person continues to treat us in an unacceptable manner.

It is the natural consequence of the other person's behaviour.

Setting a boundary is not an attempt to control the other person, it is part of the process of defining ourselves and what is acceptable to us.

There is a difference between setting a boundary in a healthy way and manipulating:

WHEN WE SET A BOUNDARY WE LET GO OF THE OUTCOME.

This is a major step in what control we have of how we allow others to treat us.

It is a vital step in taking responsibility for yourself.

In other sections of this program we discussed how our community acts as mirrors that reflect back to us who we are... our identity. This is especially true with our significant others, such as; parents, grandparents, teachers, mentors etc.

If those mirrors send a healthy message, then we develop a healthy identity. If those mirrors are broken, they send a distorted, broken message. This is explained in our 'Guilt vs Shame' module.

This broken role modelling can unfortunately teach us unhealthy boundaries, either because we learn not to value ourselves, or through observing and learning these unhealthy boundaries from our significant others....

For further study, please read;  
'The dance with Anger' by Harriet Lerner

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In your exercise book, write down on one side of the page an incident where you did not exercise your boundaries in a healthy way.

On the other side of the page, write down how this incident would have played out if you had exercised your boundaries in a healthy way.