

Boundaries: Limitations or Access to operate in freedom

Boundaries are often looked at as a form of limitation and not always understood for what it can offer in terms of the freedom it provides to those aware of it and apply it in their day-to-day choices.

This article focuses on understand what boundaries are, the different areas where boundaries can be applied in one's personal space.

Often times when one is put in a "yes" or "no" situation it can quickly result in a lot of stress and pressure on oneself when the request isn't something one is fully comfortable in accepting or participating in. These are moments when the knowledge and application of boundaries give one more freedom and ease to make our own choices.

According to the author, Henry Cloud, "Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom. Taking responsibility for my life opens up many different options." (Boundaries: when to say Yes, how to say No to take control of your Life, 1992).

Boundaries help us understand and differentiate what is within one's control and take responsibility for only those things, and know that it is okay to not personalise or take responsibility for the things that are out of our control. When a person begins to understand this, it helps them realise the power one possess over themselves and exercise it with more confidence, clarity and also influence the decisions they make that results in all the experiences that follow through their choices. Having clarity and an understanding of one's boundaries can also help in experiencing more freedom in being themselves, and being more in control of one's thoughts, emotions and actions than feeling controlled by another or feeling helpless in challenging times or in difficult situations.

Personal Boundaries refers to the boundaries we apply to our own lives in different areas that impacts and influences our personal wellbeing. Some of these boundaries fall under specific categories like:

- Physical Boundaries
- Emotional & Mental Boundaries
- Relationship Boundaries

- Professional Boundaries

Physical boundaries protect your body and space, your right to have privacy, and to meet your physical needs when necessary like eating, sleeping, etc. It also helps one express how close they are comfortable in allowing others to get to them, the kind of physical touch they are okay with sharing, the level of space and privacy they need for themselves and the freedom to decide how to behave in their own personal space. In short, “A physical boundary clearly defines that your body and personal space belong to you.” (Martin, Sharon, 2020).

Emotional or Mental boundaries are a necessity to protect one’s right to have their own thoughts and feelings, and not feel negated or condemned to do so. It is also very important to understand that emotional boundaries helps one understand and differentiate one’s feelings from others. It is never in our control to be in charge of or take responsibility for other people’s feelings no matter who the other person is (especially the ones in the close circles), and that allows oneself to be accountable for their own feelings, and not take responsibility for how others feel. “Emotional boundaries also allow us to create emotional safety by respecting each other’s feelings, not oversharing personal information that’s inappropriate for the nature or level of closeness in the relationship.” (Martin, Sharon, 2020).

Often times Boundaries in relationships leads one to immediately jump to the thought of it being a wall or a barrier between the individual and their loved one, when the actual fact of the matter is far from true. Boundaries in any relationship helps the individuals have a clearer understanding, acceptance, and most importantly mutual respect for each other’s space, time and over all well-being in all its sense. “Boundaries in relationships help you determine what you are comfortable with and how you would like to be treated by your partner. In a healthy relationship, partners respect each other’s boundaries, whether they are emotional, physical, or even digital. A lack of healthy boundaries can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, or potentially abusive even.” (Rahman, Insha, 2022)

Professional Boundaries are nothing but the boundaries we set as professionals that separates us from our personal or private lives, in other words it helps one in distinguishing between their professional life and personal life creating a healthy work-life balance. “Work-life balance is the degree to which an individual prioritizes their personal and professional responsibilities in their life and the presence of work-related activities in their home.” (Fisic, Jelena, 2022.) When healthy professional boundaries are set, one can avoid the unnecessary

burnouts from stressing or overworking, and be able to identify and be aware of what one can take responsibility for and what is okay to say no to and still maintain a healthy professional relationship at their work place. Professional boundaries also helps one understand their priorities with more clarity and exercise their full potential into executing the tasks designated to them and work towards accomplishing it. Most importantly professional boundaries help one in being aware of the time they will need to take off for themselves to recoup so that they can come back rejuvenated and let that translate into better productivity at their work space.

Boundaries are an absolute necessity in our lives , and the more aware one becomes of it, the easier it gets to navigate through the prerequisites of life as it comes. Setting healthy boundaries may look very different from one to another and from one situation to another, but it is important that one identifies and applies these boundaries in a way that fits them and the specific situation best. Finally, just as important as it is for one to work through and establish their own boundaries, it is very important for an individual to understand, acknowledge and most importantly respect the boundaries established by others for themselves irrespective of who they are.

According to Campbell, Leah (2021), “It often takes courage and strength to set boundaries, but when you do so, you can feel comfortable knowing your lines have been set. Your needs have been communicated. And if someone chooses to violate your boundaries after that, you would be within your rights to create further distance between yourself and that person.” Remember nobody has access to breach your boundary until you give them the access.

Citations:

Cloud, Henry. Townsend, Sims, John. *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, when to Say No to take Control of Your Life*. Zondervan publishing House, 1992.

Building Better Boundaries. The Self Help Alliance. Retrieved from <https://www.ualberta.ca/anesthesiology-pain-medicine/media/library/documents/workbookbuilding-better-boundariesfeb2011.pdf>

Martin, Sharon. LCSW (2020). 7 Types of Boundaries You May Need. Retrieved from <https://psychcentral.com/lib/what-are-personal-boundaries-how-do-i-get-some#takeaway>

Rahman, Insha. Saleh, Naveed. (2022). How to Set Healthy Boundaries in Relationships. *Choosing therapy*. Retrieved from <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/boundaries-in-relationships/>

Fisic, Jelena. (2022). How to set work-life Boundaries. Retrieved from <https://pumble.com/blog/work-life-boundaries/>

Campbell, Leah (2021). Why Personal Boundaries are Important and How to Set Them. Retrieved from <https://psychcentral.com/lib/what-are-personal-boundaries-how-do-i-get-some#why-its-important>