



BOUNDARY

What is true and right for us at any given moment.

What do Boundaries do?

Boundaries provide the space to create the life we want rather than simply react to events happening around us. When we're conscious about how we invest our time and energy, the important aspects of our lives will thrive. What we give our time and attention to in our life grows. Boundaries protect us from (often unconsciously) giving our energy away to people and events that do not truly support the life and relationships we are creating. Boundaries help us to respect ourselves and those around us, building trust.

How do we know what our Boundaries are?

Often many of us are unaware of a Boundary until it's been crossed. When I first started learning about Boundaries, much of my life to that point had been spent responding or reacting to the needs of those around me. This relationship dynamic was such that I seldom knew what was true and right for ME, and I found myself taking care of others to the detriment of myself. The cycle went like this: give to everyone around me, run out of energy, have a meltdown because my needs weren't being met, try to meet my needs, get caught up in meeting the needs of everyone else around me, run out of energy... When we exist in this interaction pattern, we find ourselves depleted and our relationships unfulfilling. Reacting to life and surviving rather than thriving. I spent many years operating this way and feeling overwhelmed and tired much of the time because of it.

Once I became aware of this unproductive interaction pattern and decided it was time for a change, I started to ask myself "Kelley, what do you want / need right now?". Give it a try: Ask yourself what YOU need right now. Were you able to answer or did a feeling of anxiety present for you? If you're anything like I was you felt anxious when asking yourself about your needs and there's a high likelihood that you are out of practice tuning in to your own needs and desires. No worries! This is a skill we all can foster.

When we can recognize any current Boundary, more than half the work is already done. Remember, Boundaries are simply what is okay for us and what's not okay, about anything.

Think about Your Boundaries in the following areas:

- **You:**
 - The minimum we do for ourselves on a given day; bathe, dress, brush teeth, feed ourselves, coffee / tea, exercise, etc.
 - How much sleep we individually need, how and when we sleep best
 - Our food and drink preferences
- **Children:**
 - Where and when our kiddos sleep. (co-sleeping vs. cribs, anyone?)
 - What, when and how our littles eat

- How and where our kiddos are educated
- What activities our littles spend time doing
- **Partner:**
 - Who we choose to be with represents a whole group of Boundaries we have for ourselves in what we are okay with accepting in our partner
 - How much and what kind of: time together, intimacy, expectations for support
 - Toilet roll debate – which way do you put your TP on?
- **Family:**
 - How much and what kind of: time together, information about private life, expectations for support and decision-making influence
- **Friends:**
 - Activities we do together
 - Topics discussed
 - Amount of sharing about current events and challenges
- **Work:**
 - What work we do
 - When we do our work
 - How we do our work

I encourage you to explore the Boundaries you have in all areas of your life. The better we know ourselves and what works best for us, the easier it is to communicate these needs and desires with those in our lives.

Communicating our Boundaries

Boundaries can be communicated in any number of ways to anyone in our lives. The way we share our boundaries often depends on the relationship with the person we are setting a Boundary with. When we first begin communicating our Boundaries more directly it helps to start with more peripheral relationships. Asking the person bagging at the grocery to pack items a certain way, telling someone that we are unable to help with an event, and taking time off work for another purpose are all examples of setting peripheral boundaries. Many of us can communicate these Boundaries with minimal stress but may still struggle to communicate our boundaries productively with those we love.

Sharing with others in our personal lives about what is okay for us can often feel vulnerable. We may have to share about parts of ourselves that are not comfortable to be open about. However, there are times in our life when we simply must communicate with those we love what is True and Right for us because their behavior is impacting us and / or we may need their support to meet our needs. It is the most difficult to set a Boundary with those we love when our need contradicts their needs or desires. This is when many of us falter and defer to managing our feelings and needs independently to spare our love their feelings and ourselves the vulnerable conversation. Unfortunately, this lack of sharing our truth often leads to needs not being met and feelings of resentment.

Boundary communication requires attention and practice. Understanding what is true and right for us in any given situation followed by communication with those who need to understand our Boundary is the 2nd Aspect of Resilience and the most challenging for many of us. Giving ourselves permission to take up space in our lives and families is often the very first step.

When Boundaries are Respected

When we begin to respect our own Boundaries and follow through with what is true and right for us, those around us also begin to respect our Boundaries with less of a challenge. Often, we simply don't know the preferences of people around us unless they communicate them to us. Similarly, the people in our lives are not good at reading our mind. Communication is key to having positive Boundaries in our lives.

I completed a training with Joan Borysenko. She is an expert in Resilience, a scientist and phenomenal person. Joan told a story about practicing Boundary setting. Her therapist tasked her with telling the next person who asked her to read a manuscript “no” without further explanation. The thought of doing this made Joan's anxiety rise but she accepted the challenge. The next request came while she was signing books after a talk. An enthusiastic person approached with a manuscript sharing how Joan had “changed her life” and she was “so thankful” and “will you read my manuscript?” Joan shared how anxious she felt knowing what she would have to do.

With many people still milling around to witness, Joan replied “no.” To which the person protested and requested again. “No” was the reply. Joan shared that after this experience she has had much less trouble setting Boundaries. And she now has the time she desires to live her life in a way that is true and right for her and those in her immediate sphere versus expending time and energy on ventures that were not ultimately productive for her.

When our Boundaries are respected, we own our power. We save ourselves energy wasted on frustration and resentment for not having what is needed for us to thrive. We are all worthy to taking up space in our lives, families and communities. Boundaries are part of how we do that. Standing in our truth and worthiness yields a higher likelihood for productivity and supports ease of movement through life's challenges. When we have our life set up in a way that is productive and helpful for us as individuals, disruptions are less likely to have a major impact. Because our baseline tension level will be lower. And we are better able to take a step back and evaluate changes with curiosity rather than judgement.

Knowing our self is key. Investigating our preferences and desires for this life with curiosity rather than judgement supports understanding and acceptance of ourselves. No matter what, there are other people out there who will accept us for who we are. But it's impossible to be accepted and our Boundaries respected if we don't show up authentically and communicate honestly. We have the choice when and what boundaries to communicate.

Boundaries Create Space