

## **Boundaries (Posted on 04.07.2021)**

What I am about to share with you I have learnt through my own experiences and from the book Boundaries by Dr Henry Cloud and John Townsend. Anyone who has been in addiction or is trying to assist someone who has an addiction should most definitely invest in this book. Boundary issues do not always show up in the addiction cycle, they often show up in many other aspects of our lives. Having no boundaries does not necessarily mean that you cannot say no and that you are a people pleaser. Having boundary issues may well be that you cannot accept no from someone else, and you will either manipulate or bully someone out of their no. Its quite broad and quite complicated.

### **Lack of boundaries in the cycle of addiction can surface in the following ways:**

- 1) Feelings are consumed in the relationship (You feel bad therefore I must feel bad too) “I need you to be happy” “How can I fix this for you?”
- 2) Extremely afraid to let go & trying to change or control someone (Not being able to separate from a significant other) Enmeshment.
- 3) Excessive fear of risk or change, refusal to commit
- 4) Little individual growth
- 5) Mind games are played, you are easily being manipulated, power games
- 6) Trying to get something by giving
- 7) Needing others to feel secure & happy, repeatedly experiencing negative feelings
- 8) Being afraid of closeness and affection
- 9) Cares with excessive detachment (emotionally withdraws or just does not care)
- 10) Looking to others for self-worth (the way you act reflects who I am, or you are responsible to make me happy)

### **Why are People scared to set boundaries with others?**

- 1) They fear people being upset or angry with them
- 2) They fear conflict
- 3) They fear hurting someone else’s feelings
- 4) They think that boundaries are selfish
- 5) They feel guilty for setting a limit on someone else
- 6) They do not know how to say no to someone who needs their time, money, love & energy

**We cannot  
simultaneously set a  
boundary and take  
care of another  
person's feelings.**

**— Melody Beattie**



### **What does a Boundary look like?**

A physical boundary is easy to see (e.g., a boundary line / wall etc.) It marks where our property begins and where it ends. The owner of said property is legally responsible for what happens on this property.

Our own personal boundaries are **harder to see**, BUT THE SAME RULE APPLIES. We generally do not invite anyone onto our physical property (our house) to take whatever they want, but we tend to allow this to happen with our emotions and our own personal space all too often.

Boundaries let the good in and the bad out. Boundaries must be flexible. Boundaries should have a gate. A gate that we can open to let the bad experiences or behaviour out and invite the good things in.

A boundary defines me. It defines what is me and what is not me. It shows me where I end and where someone else begins. A boundary will lead me to a sense of ownership. If I do not own my life then my choices become limited, setting a boundary will in fact set me free.

### **We are Responsible TO Others we are not Responsible FOR Others**

We should never do something for someone that they can do for themselves.

From time to time we (or someone else) can become overwhelmed with issues or problems that are like boulders, in other words, they are too heavy to carry ourselves, we **need help** to deal with

such **heavy** issues, so we seek help, possibly from a counsellor. The counsellor is responsible **TO YOU** ~ he or she is going to assist you to make this boulder a little bit smaller, he or she is going to give you the tools required to make your burdens much lighter. The onus is then on you to either use the assistance or advice that you have been offered or you can choose not to. The counsellor is not responsible **FOR YOU**. He or she cannot force or make you do the right thing and if he/she ends up forcing you then that person / counsellor has boundary issues. We all have daily issues that need to be dealt with, **THIS WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES**, and we have a responsibility to ourselves to deal with this on our own. **NOBODY ELSE CAN BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE ISSUES FOR US.**

Boundary issues occur when the above is reversed. Let me give an example. Sarah has got a lot on her plate; she has got so much going on that she feels completely overwhelmed with everything. She does not know how to cope; she is suffering from panic attacks and depression. Sarah's friend, Tanya suggests that she go and visit a counsellor. Sarah maintains that she does not need any help and continues on her own, eventually Sarah is going to find herself in trouble because she does not want to let anyone in, she does not want to accept help for herself. Sarah's friend Tanya can only be **RESPONSIBLE TO HER, SHE CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER AND MAKE HER DO SOMETHING SHE DOES NOT WANT TO DO**. Being responsible to Sarah, Tanya can only make suggestions, it is then up to Sarah to take the next steps.

It is easy to misunderstand boundaries because most often it is thought that people who cannot say no or cannot set limits are the ones that have boundary problems, but this is not the case. When we have daily problems and we expect others to deal with these for us, this is a boundary issue as well.



## The Different Types of Boundary Issues

### THE COMPLIANT PERSON WHO SAYS YES TO THE BAD

When a person is taught that saying no or setting a boundary is bad, the person reinforces their own belief that other people can do with them whatever they want to. Please remember that you have the power to say No; I do not want to; I disagree; I choose not to; I will not or - I do not like it when...**The compliant fears being shamed, they fear being seen as selfish or bad. THE COMPLIANT HAS A FEAR OF HIS / HER OVERSTRICT, CRITICAL CONSCIENCE & THIS IS EXPERIENCED AS GUILT, WHICH EQUALS THE INABILITY TO CONFRONT OTHERS.**

For me, it is that voice in my head that keeps telling me, "Don't be so selfish!" Its extremely hard to set a boundary and say to no when you know that you have the ability or means to do something for someone, but you choose not to.

***"Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others" Brene Brown***

### THE AVOIDANT PERSON SAYS NO TO THE GOOD



This is the inability to ask for help, it is the inability to recognise one's own needs. The avoidant has a boundary that is like a brick wall, like a fort and this person will never let anyone in and they

also will never let anything out either. Can you imagine everything that would be brewing inside of the avoidant? All that pressure!

Remember that a boundary is supposed to breathe, a boundary must be like a fence with a gate that will let good things in and bad things out. The avoidant lets nothing in and nothing out, nobody can help them. The resistant boundaries of the avoidant cause's inflexibility towards what this person really needs.

### **THE COMPLIANT / AVOIDANT COMBINATION**

People who have both boundary conflicts say yes to the bad and no to the good. In other words, they will continue to burn themselves out saying yes to everyone, but they are unable to accept for themselves the same treatment they so readily offer to others. These people have reversed boundaries.

**THEY HAVE NO BOUNDARIES WHERE THEY NEED THEM AND HAVE BOUNDARIES  
WHERE THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE THEM**

Boundaries are your  
responsibility.  
You decide what is  
and isn't allowed in  
*your life.*

*Brittney Moses*

**THEN WE HAVE THE CONTROLLERS**

**THOSE WHO DO NOT RESPECT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS**

**THEY EITHER USE MANIPULATION OR AGGRESSION TO BREAK THE BOUNDARIES**

Aggressive Controllers are the people who run over other people's boundaries like a tank! They are sometimes verbally abusive as well as physically. Mostly they are unaware that others even have boundaries. Remember as well for those of us that do not like conflict, aggression can also be used as a tactic of manipulation. Displays of aggression will often force the softer person to break their own boundaries.

Controllers live in a world of yes where there is no place for someone else's no. They attempt to get others to change, to make the world fit their idea of the way life should be. They neglect their own responsibility to accept others as they are.

The Manipulative Controller is less honest than the aggressive controller. Manipulators try and persuade people out of their boundaries. They talk others into yes. They indirectly manipulate circumstances to get their way.



**The Manipulative Controller will seduce you into carrying their burdens.**

**They use guilt messages**

Never ignore  
the warning signs  
of **manipulation...**



### **THE NON - RESPONSIVES**

The Non – Responsive is the person with a critical spirit toward the needs of others. These people hate being incomplete in themselves so as a result they ignore the needs of others. The Non – Responsive is so absorbed in their own desires and needs that they exclude others, this is a form of narcissism. Controllers and non-responsive persons see others as responsible for their struggles and are always on the lookout for someone to take care of them.

You can't always be taking care  
of others, someday you need  
to take care of yourself too  
cause you burn out.

### **HOW TO BUILD HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**

Start slowly, its not going to happen overnight

Start practising, start small

If you suddenly bombard people with no, they are going to kick against you

Will people get angry? Yes, they will

Will you hurt someone's feelings? Probably

Always make sure that when you say yes to something, you mean it, do not create an expectation that you cannot see through

**MAKE YOUR YES, YOUR YES AND YOUR NO YOUR NO**

People with boundary problems usually have distorted attitudes about responsibility. They feel that to hold someone responsible for their feelings, choices and behaviours is mean.

### **BEHAVIOURS HAVE CONSEQUENCES**

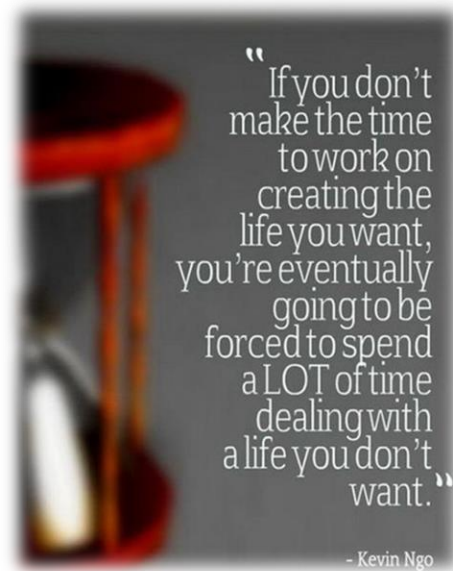
The first thing you need to learn is that the person who is angry at you for setting boundaries is the one with the problem.

Drs. Cloud and Townsend  
Boundaries

If we start to stand in the way of people facing the consequences of their actions, we may end up causing a whole lot more damage to the person involved, because if we keep on rescuing, they will never ever learn. What a person reaps so he will sow. When we interrupt this process, so often a person is not really driven to get the help that they need because they have someone in their life that is facing the consequences for them.

Often, we are told to "set limits on others" but this is often not possible. What we can do is set limits to our exposure to people who are behaving badly, we must realise that we cannot change them or make them right. This is called detachment. We need to set STANDARDS. This is when we let people be who they are, but we separate ourselves when the behaviour becomes toxic.





We are not being unloving. Separating ourselves protects love because we are taking a stand against things that destroy love. We should listen or take into consideration the thoughts of others and weigh them, but we should never give our minds over to anyone. What we allow is going to continue.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

Try not to take things so personally, how a person looks and behaves is not a direct reflection of you. Be direct and learn how to communicate assertively. Use I statements. Look into better ways of saying no, think it through before you say yes. If you are unsure say "I will come back to you" Resist arguing, aim at having a mature conversation. If emotions are running high take a time out to regain control. Sometimes complete separation is what is needed, perhaps if a problem cannot be resolved you need someone else to intervene.

### **AND FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE WITH CERTAIN TYPES OF BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES (LIKE ADDICTION) HERE ARE SOME DO'S AND DON'TS**

#### **DO**

Learn the facts

Develop a different approach

Talk to someone who understands

Take your own personal inventory

Attend a support group

Maintain a healthy home atmosphere

Encourage new interests

Deal with a relapse / deal with the problem - STAY CALM

Share your knowledge and experience with others when necessary

### **PLEASE DON'T**

Preach or lecture – it will just make it worse

Be judgmental because the guilt is already there

Try “if you love me” emotional blackmail

Threaten, unless you are prepared to carry it out

Argue or discuss anything when the person is having an episode, or is drunk or high

Expect recovery to happen overnight it is a process

Overprotect someone from their consequences

Encourage wrong support systems

### **GUIDE INFORM SUPPORT**

I will help you not to wallow in your own misery

I will help you to grow and become more productive

I will help you to become more enthusiastic, less sensitive, and kinder to yourself

I will help you to be free but responsible for your own life

I will encourage you, but I will not dream for you

I will let you face reality even though at times this will be extremely hard

I cannot bear your pain and your loneliness for you





