

# CULTIVATING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

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Merriam-Webster's definition of boundary is "something (such as a river, a fence, or an imaginary line) that shows where an area ends and another area begins." Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Personal boundaries relate to people and behavior. There are many reasons to be cognizant of personal boundaries. They can help you define who you are, practice self-care and respect, communicate your needs in a relationship, set healthy limits, and make time and space for healthy interactions.

There are many types of personal boundaries, including emotional, mental, physical, sexual, financial, social, and spiritual. It seems obvious that no one would want their boundaries crossed. So, why do we sometimes allow our boundaries to be crossed or cross others' boundaries? Or even worse, why don't we set healthy boundaries for ourselves and our family and communicate them clearly? A few reasons may be fear, guilt, confusion, and not being familiar with boundaries and communicating them.

Having to say "yes" or "no" can be a struggle. Experiencing other people's pain or problems is real. It can be hard to let people in your life (even yourself) know what you want, need, or how you feel.

Here are a few ways to create healthy boundaries:



- Realize you can't please everyone and don't compare. Get comfortable with the prospect of being met with some disapproval or "letting people down". Speak up for yourself in relationships so that you feel heard. Start asking yourself, "What am I feeling and why am I feeling this way? What does this have to do with boundaries?"
- Do you have a mission statement for yourself, your family, and/or your business? Do you have core values? If not, spend some time writing these down. (More on this in Conscious Collective 002, June 2019)
- Set your boundaries. Are you clear on your limits and non-negotiables? If not, spend some time identifying and defining them. What brings you happiness, joy, contentment, peace? What makes you angry, sad, depressed, or stressed? Also, be honest with yourself and look at your strengths and weaknesses so you can decide if the boundaries need to be hard or soft.
- Learn to say "no".- Being unable to say "no" can make you feel overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed, overcommitted, depressed, and generally frustrated. It could even be undermining any efforts you're making to improve your health. Learn to say "no" to certain commitments, to things that aren't good for you, and to toxic relationships to start applying this principle. Every "no" looks different. Learn to be okay with saying "no" without feeling like you have to explain or qualify your answer.

There are times when your boundaries will still get crossed. Here are a few tools to help you cope and respond that encourage mental health:

- Fill your space with words of affirmation, scriptures, quotes, words. Your space is your journal, your home, your car, wherever! There is power in thought, prayer, and tongue, so read them and speak them until you believe them. Catch yourself when you speak negatively and change it to something positive.
- Find a "pusher" and a "mentor" in your life. These are people who know you—the real you, the deep you. A pusher is someone who pushes you to be the best you can be. The pusher holds you accountable and doesn't sit quietly when you goof up. A mentor is someone who has already done what you are trying to do and is successful. S/he can guide you down the path letting you know what has worked and failed for him/her, helping you avoid any mistakes that might slow you down. This person is a reminder that you, too, can do amazing things. When you are feeling weak, call these people to bring the darkness to the light and ask them to walk alongside you. (More on this in Conscious Collective 002, June 2019)
- Create a power playlist, one that is specific to your needs, a playlist that becomes your go-to, pick-me-up, motivational soundtrack to play when you need reminders or inspiration.

- Don't beat yourself if you break a boundary. Take some time to get an environment where you can think, reflect, pray. Think back to what was happening, triggers, or emotions that may have contributed to your breaking the boundary. Start writing, dumping it all out. Think through ways you may be able to change your rhythm or "take breaks" in the future to avoid breaking that boundary again.

To really affect lasting change, it's important that you change your perspective when it comes to setting boundaries. And, this involves creating behaviors to enable you to put your priorities where they need to be—for the sake of your health.





Stress is an indication that you're not honouring a boundary somewhere.