

Boundary Basics

Respect—(for) Self and (to) Others:

Requires setting appropriate boundaries for self and respecting the boundaries that others set

Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, 'Let me wash your face for you,' when your own face is distorted by contempt? It's this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor. Matthew 7:1–5, The Message

Murky Motives: Untangling the motivation that drives our decision-making and boundary-less living

- When we say “yes” and then resent it, we may be saying “yes” because we **fear**: loss of love or abandonment, others' anger, loneliness, or losing our “good” reputation.
- When we feel guilty, we often try to perform and “be good” by giving and giving and giving.
- When we have received things with guilt messages attached, we may feel ashamed and burdened by the need to “give back.”
- When we seek approval, we seek to please.
- When we have unhealed wounds, sometimes we overidentify with other people's pain, so we never want to disappoint by saying “no.”

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Psalm 16:6-8 NIV

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. 1 John 4:17–18, The Message

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you. Galatians 5:1, The Message

Healthy motivation says: freedom first, service second— springing from a grateful, loving heart.

Responsible to Evaluate:

Does our decision to set a boundary hurt or harm?

The wounds of a friend can be trusted. Proverbs 27:6

An honest answer is like a warm hug. Proverbs 24:26, The Message

The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry, and a wise friend's timely reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger. Proverbs 25:11–12, The Message

You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17, The Message