

Reach Out!

Boundaries Workshop Preview

Introduction

Boundaries are crucial for healthy individuals and healthy relationships. Owning, respecting and honoring personal and others' boundaries in turn affects the health of our families, friends, classes, teams, organizations, faith-based groups, and workplaces.

What are boundaries?

In the physical world, we see boundaries that define who owns and has responsibility for property. Examples of these boundaries are fences, walls, signs, hedges, a line of trees, doors, and gates. We are responsible for the physical space that we own, borrow, or rent. To abuse, destroy, or hurt another's property breaks the law and has consequences.

Personal boundaries define who is "me" and who is "not me." As social beings, our creation and maintenance of boundaries requires a support network. Authentic mentoring encourages each person to grow and to develop boundaries in the areas stated in our *Reach Out* mentoring definition —academic, emotional, social, spiritual, and physical realms.

Boundaries evolve throughout our lives. We constantly develop boundaries and limits for ourselves as we interact with and learn from different people and groups. Much of our beliefs and attitudes about boundaries evolved from what we saw and experienced at home and at school or college.

Concept of Boundaries

The basic concept is that boundaries define who is "me" and who is "not me."

Simply put, boundaries define who I am and what my responsibilities are. When we look at the "big picture" or "umbrella concept" of things, it is helpful to look at examples and non-examples. The following chart may help you grasp the concept of boundaries. Add your own life examples and non-examples of boundaries.

Example of boundaries	Non-example of boundaries
I am responsible for my own happiness.	I am responsible for your happiness. Or you are responsible to make me happy.
I am responsible for my behavior.	I am responsible for your behavior. Or you are responsible for what I do.
I own my attitude and outlook on life.	I am responsible for your attitude. Or you are responsible for my attitude.
I am responsible for my choices.	I am responsible for your choices. Or you are responsible for my choices.
I am responsible for my feelings.	I am responsible for your feelings. Or you are responsible for my feelings.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Boundary Principles & Facts

Some basic guiding principles for boundaries:

- Boundaries are essential to protect me—they are my invisible fences.
- I am responsible to know, guard, and communicate my boundaries and limits.
- If I know my own boundaries, I can respect others' boundaries.

Facts regarding boundaries:

- No one has or keeps perfect boundaries.
- Everyone struggles to establish and maintain healthy boundaries throughout life.
- Boundaries offer protection from people who might control us, hurt us, abuse us, manipulate us, or use us.

Kinds of Boundaries

There are many ways to categorize and relate to boundaries. For now, we will simply look at boundaries as being external and internal. **Internal boundaries** allow us to control and take responsibility for our own beliefs, memories, thoughts, feelings, values, hopes, dreams, and passions. Internal boundaries are essential so that we do not blame others for our emotions. And internal boundaries are necessary to keep us from taking responsibility for others' behaviors, ideas, and feelings.

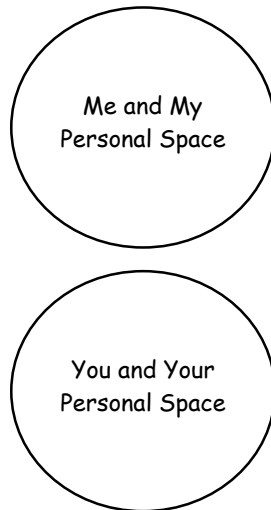
External boundaries give us control over all things about our physical being. External boundaries define whom we let into our “physical space.” For example, we are in charge of who touches us and how they touch us. External boundaries are critical for deciding about people touching us in any sexual way. We need to process our “internal boundaries” related to lust, sex, and physical touch in order to then choose to have physical boundaries. We need these boundaries to choose when and who can give us a hug, kiss, or handshake. We need to clearly know our external boundaries in order to speak up and define limits for various people and in different situations.

One area that is a good point of discussion for our children is to talk about how they choose to dress. If we dress in a sexually provocative way, we are inviting others to enter our physical space.

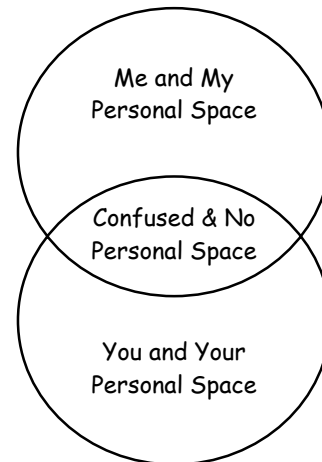
Basic Boundary Concept Map

We all struggle with establishing and maintaining our own healthy boundaries. Remember: no one keeps perfect boundaries! This visual can help us discern what a relationship looks like with healthy and unhealthy boundaries.

Healthy Boundaries



Unhealthy Boundaries



Boundaries are crucial for healthy individuals and healthy relationships.

- Boundaries define who is “me” and who is “not me.”
- Boundaries are essential to protect us.

The healthiest relationship acknowledges that one person is a whole person and the other person is a whole person. We do not need someone else to “complete us” or to “make us whole.” Boundaries are crucial to maintain a separation of “you” and “me.”

Boundaries set down the line where my physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and psychological space ends and where the other person's begins.

We live in a day when we personally attack, assault, and put down others who are not like us. We easily try to stereotype and label one another and to persuade others to be, think, feel, and act like us. Let your mentoring partner (and others) be him- or herself. You be yourself! Together, you support one another in becoming unique, responsible, and worthy individuals!

Learn to share ideas, feelings, concerns, worries, fears, *et al.* in an open and respectful manner. You can disagree or discuss things, but strive never to judge or push your "self" on your partner or others in your life. Boundaries—important to have and keep!



Reach Out!

Worksheet: *Boundaries*

Name: _____ Date: _____

Partner: _____

1. Think of a person with whom you have trouble setting and keeping external or internal boundaries.
2. Circle any of these “caution signs” of boundary trouble you experience with him or her. Remember, there are hundreds we could probably come up with, but we simply do not have the space to write them all!

I could not make my own decisions.

I did not feel comfortable asking what s/he needed or wanted from me.

I struggled to say “no” to him or her.

I was too sensitive to his or her criticism of me.

I felt responsible for her or his feelings.

I took on his or her mood when we were together.

I could not state my own idea, belief, attitude, or opinion that was different from his or hers.

I often feel anxious and nervous when I am with him or her.

I gossip about others we both know when I am with him or her.

I do things I do not really want to do that he or she wants to do.

I think I need to please him or her.

I think I have to make him or her “happy.”

I have trouble trusting him or her.

I have a hard time looking him or her in the eye.

I disparage others’ ideas, beliefs, attitudes, or opinions when I am with him or her.

I let him or her interrupt me.

I get caught up in his or her life or problems.

I let him or her try to rescue, fix, or save me when I am having problems or struggles.

I keep rehashing the same complaints, resentments, dislikes about another person with him or her.

I spend money that I really should not spend to go places he or she wants to go.

I try to force my ideas, beliefs, values or opinions on him or her.

I say things or “push buttons” that I know will hurt or anger him or her.

I stretch the truth or exaggerate often when I am with him or her.

1. We all struggle at times to recognize and honor others' boundaries. Consider these few signs of disrespect. Circle any that have or currently do apply to you with others.
2. Reflect and share with a partner what you think is happening to you in this relationship. It may help you to jot down some ideas or notes on our "unhealthy" circle diagram.

