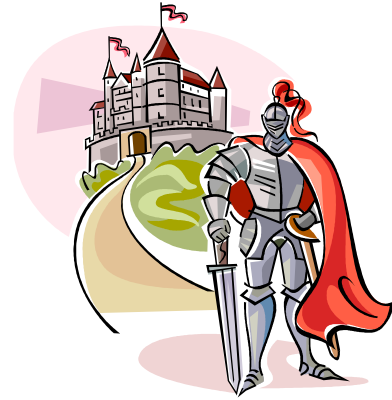


UNDERSTANDING & SETTING BOUNDARIES



What are boundaries?

Boundaries refers to the limits we set on the quality, quantity and nature of our interactions with other people. Specific examples might be the way we allow others to treat us - including the way they speak to us, or the demands they might place on us.

In some ways it is the behaviour towards us that we tolerate or accept. This in particular is why boundaries matter, because if we allow others to treat us badly or even abusively we are undermining our own self respect and self esteem. The implications for mental health are obvious.

How are you at maintaining boundaries?

A good way to check on your own boundaries is to ask yourself "What happens when you are uncomfortable in your interactions with others?" and "How do you communicate or respond at these times?"

You may discover that you are good at setting and maintaining boundaries in some areas of your life and not in others. Often it is easier to set boundaries with co-workers because there are rules around interactions and expectations in most workplaces as a base to build your own boundaries.

It can be harder with friends, and particularly difficult with family members. This is because over time, relationships can become like a dance with predictable steps and roles for each participant - if you have always given in to a particular person, they will expect that to continue and you will be more likely to respond in the same old way out of habit.

How can I change the boundaries?

Changing boundaries is hard.

Where relationships have become uneven or "one-way" then there will be resistance to change.

The key to changing relationships is knowing how you want the relationship to be and how you would like to be treated; and then to communicate this assertively. You may ultimately decide to move away from some relationships that prove resistant to change.

What if my boundaries are too high?

This often happens when a person has been badly used and hurt in the past, we tend to go into our shell and keep clear of the potential for harm. The problem is that because of our fear, we screen out potentially fulfilling relationships with people who are respectful.


The table below gives us a quick guide to the perils of Inflexible (closed off) boundaries and Collapsed boundaries.

As always the sweet spot is in the middle where we exercise self knowledge and insight, self esteem, self respect and respect for others in a balanced way.

Inflexible Boundaries

Healthy Boundaries

Collapsed Boundaries



<p>Fear being hurt or taken advantage of</p> <p>Difficulty identifying your wants, needs & feelings</p> <p>Say No to avoid dealing with others</p> <p>Avoid people, intimacy</p> <p>Refuse to share personal information</p> <p>Fear abandonment or suffocation</p> <p>Loneliness, distrust, low self esteem, anger, control</p>	<p>Feel free to say yes or no without guilt, anger or fear</p> <p>Refuse to tolerate abuse or disrespect</p> <p>Know when a problem is yours or another persons</p> <p>Refuse to take on other people's problems</p> <p>Have a strong sense of identity</p> <p>Respect yourself</p> <p>Share responsibility, expect reciprocity in relationships</p> <p>Feel freedom, security, peace, joy & confidence</p>	<p>Say yes to all requests because you fear rejection / abandonment</p> <p>Tolerate abuse or disrespectful treatment</p> <p>Feel you deserve to be treated poorly</p> <p>Avoid conflict</p> <p>Have no sense of who you are or what you feel, need, want, think</p> <p>Not see flaws and weaknesses in others</p> <p>Focus on pleasing those around you</p> <p>Take on the feelings of other</p>
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