

BRILLIANT BOUNDARY SETTING

For Personal and Professional Wellbeing

One of the most important things that we human beings need to learn in order to take care of ourselves in life is how to set and keep good boundaries.

A boundary is a safety tool that protects both our inner and outer resources.

It can protect our mental and emotional space, our physical body, our time and energy, and our personal or business property.

A boundary is a sign of self-respect. It says to others, *“This is what I will and will not allow”* or *“This is what I do or do not want.”* It teaches others how to treat us and it honors our own worth and value as a person.

A boundary is a standard for healthy behavior in relationships. It sets up a parameter for interpersonal exchanges. It allows us to set the tone and the limits of our interactions with others.

Setting an appropriate boundary is one of the simplest ways to ensure one’s own safety and peace of mind. It gives a clear guideline for self and others to follow.

Failure to set and maintain healthy boundaries in one’s personal or professional life can result in great disruption and stress. It can cause feelings of being used, overwhelmed and ignored. In the work environment it can even lead to total burnout.

In any relationship, blurred or non-existent boundaries often leads to deep resentment and the breakdown of both trust and respect. Without those two essentials – trust and respect – there can be no real growth or true intimacy.

Boundaries fall into three basic categories:

A line in the sand, a fence, or a wall.

- 1) **A line in the sand is a temporary, short-term boundary for a specific situation.** An example would be the boss who needs to restrict distractions during an important meeting and so instructs the secretary to hold all calls until further notice. In our daily lives this type of boundary can be everything from a lane restriction on the highway to an out of order sign on a coffee machine.
- 2) **A fence is a more permanent boundary that asks for restraint or respect in some way.** Think of a fence in someone's yard. Neighbors can see across the fence, speak to each other across it, but also know it is meant to define another's property and restrict general traffic. In business the fence may be a policy for employees or clients to follow, rules and regulations guiding company operations, or a code of conduct. In our personal lives, this kind of boundary tells people how we want and expect to be treated.
- 3) **A wall is a permanent boundary that fully restricts inappropriate or dangerous behavior.** This boundary is set for maximum protection of all concerned. It is *never* relaxed and remains in place no matter who is in charge. Examples include the restriction of weapons in schools, the ban on sexual harassment in the workplace, and all of our laws against assaulting another.

Consider the following points for the most effective use of boundaries:

- *Know what the boundary is really for. Why do you want to set it and what specific change do you want from it?*
- *Know who the boundary will impact or affect besides yourself.*
- *Use as few words as possible in setting your boundary. Make sure that it is stated in a direct, clear, simple, and to the point.*

- *Keep emotions out of your voice and your choice of words as much as possible. Choose words and phrases that have a lower chance of escalating the drama within the situation you are addressing.*
- *Know that since you are the one who is setting the boundary, you are the one responsible for enforcing or maintaining it.*
- *Once you have set your boundary, be sure to check out whether your message has been received or not. You may have to redraw a boundary several times until it forms a new habit of response within yourself and the others involved.*
- *Know that you can relax, strengthen, change or dissolve a boundary as conditions permit or require. Be sure that you are clear about why you are making the change.*

While learning to set boundaries may be outside your present comfort zone, know that with practice you will gain confidence both in identifying the situations where boundaries are needed and then putting them in place. You are worthy of respect and you can ask for that respect in Brilliant Boundary Setting.

REMEMBER

**Where your safety is compromised in any way,
the protection of boundaries is needed immediately.
Do not hesitate to seek help.**

~ Louise Dunn ~