

## **WOMEN, BOUNDARIES, & BEREAVEMENT**

So much of our health and general wellbeing as women depends on our ability to set and maintain good boundaries. And at no time of life is that ability perhaps more necessary than during a time of grieving and bereavement.

It seems that many women automatically default to a care-taking role during a loss or trauma and forget to attend to their own healing process.

Sometimes that focus is truly justified as in the case of a death or loss that places decision-making responsibilities on our shoulders. Even then, our own grief must be recognized and addressed.

**The unattended pain of loss doesn't go away;  
it just goes deeper.**

A big part of attending to our grief is setting good boundaries.

*Every boundary we set is an act of self-love;* it's a limit we place on ourselves or others for the purpose of self-protection.

We set boundaries over –

- *our physical needs,*
- *our daily routine,*
- *our work schedule,*
- *our social calendar and commitments,*
- *our list of responsibilities,*
- *and our expectations of ourselves and others.*

We also set limits on who we will interact with during our bereavement and on how and to what extent we will be engaged with others.

**What needs protection most of all is our grieving heart**, the seat of our emotions. We need to be able to feel and express our feelings without fear of judgment or rejection by others.

We need to have a safe place to cry, be angry, and to speak about our loss openly and honestly and how it impacts our present and future life.

We also need to protect our time and energy. In grief we may have much less energy to give to our usual activities. We may find that we are short tempered or have a lower tolerance for things we could overlook before.

Our physical and mental wellbeing can be compromised as our needs change during this *“time of fierceness and fragility”* as a friend of mine calls it. This is a perfect time to rein in our expectations of ourselves and to be more gentle and undemanding.

**Here are three easy ways to set healthy boundaries in bereavement:**

1. *Decide what you are really capable of doing right now and what you can let go of for a while.*
2. *Make small adjustments to your schedule wherever possible, keeping in mind that you may need more rest than usual.*
3. *Say “No thank you” to invitations that you think will take more energy than you care to give to something right now.*

**Be good to yourself first in your bereavement.**

**Your life is worthy of the love and attention of healthy boundaries.**