

Boundaries Define Your Self



With coaches Raiane Cantisano and Tyla Fowler

BOUNDARIES ARE NOT making people wrong, getting people to do what I want them to do, punishing someone, or a weapon.

BOUNDARIES ARE being responsible for my own emotional experience, stating clearly what I will or won't engage with, and letting people know the standards I hold for being in relationship with me.

BOUNDARIES ARE ALSO things that are within my power to control:

- **NO** (not within my control): if you do X, then you *have to do* Y
- **YES** (within my control): if you do X, I will do Y
- **EVEN MORE YES** (within my control and in advance, from vision): I love this agreement we're making, and here are my fears and the ways in which I already know I'll get weird if it starts not working the way we planned. I'm really committed to that not happening, so my commitment is that if X happens, I will Y.

If your intention is to be fully self-expressed around your vision and who you want to be in the relationships—to be seen in all of your messiness and vulnerability—while also putting others at choice around how they show up for you **AND** letting them know in advance the consequence of that choice, that's a boundary.

BOUNDARY PRACTICE:

- Learning to identify my own wants and needs in the moment they arise.
- Practicing being in clear, reliable and consistent communication about my wants and needs, even when it's uncomfortable.
- Cultivating a willingness to stand for my wants/needs, even when I don't understand them, know where they're coming from, or get why they're here.
- Interrupting and ultimately dismantling the pattern of abandoning myself in order to make others comfortable or because it's "easy."
- Letting people know in advance the consequences of their actions and putting them at choice.
- Trusting myself and the people around me to be fully responsible for our own emotional experiences and reactions.
- Putting down the habit of justifying and explaining my actions and being willing to let go of the habit of constantly trying to understand and/or be understood as a way to feel safe.
- Pre-determining the conditions under which I will allow myself to walk away from and/or disengage with a situation that doesn't serve my wellbeing.

WHERE TO BEGIN:

- List the places where you've not been fully responsible for communicating about your wants, needs, and experience.
- If you're unsure where to start, look for places where you have anger, resentment, depletion, fear or other icky feelings happening, as this is often an indicator that we need a boundary.
- After identifying where a boundary is needed, own where you haven't been being responsible / in communication.
- Practice forgiving yourself for how it has or hasn't gone so far.
- Drop into vision: **"How do I want it to go? How do I want to be around this person or in this situation? What boundary would I need to put in place to support me being that way?"**
- If you don't know what boundary to create, play with it! Make a list of 10+ things you might do in response to this person/situation "crossing the line," and choose what possible response feels best based on your vision and how you're committed to *being* with this person/situation.
- Get grounded. Communicate your boundary if needed. Start by acknowledging the person and what they mean to you as a basis for the conversation.
- Get supported! Phone a friend. Hire a coach. Talk with a mentor.
- Practice trusting yourself and others. Be willing to get awkward and messy!
- Know that if the conversation doesn't go well the first time, you can always go out and come back in, taking responsibility for whatever you brought to the space (fear, defensiveness, etc).