

# Relationship Development

ASHLEIGH WELCH | MBA



# Boundaries

A boundary is something you create for yourself, and it's commonly used in coaching to achieve life changing results. It can be mistaken as a way to control other people, but that's really not the function of a boundary. An emotional boundary is very much like a property boundary—it delineates where one person ends and another one starts. It's a way of “drawing a circle” around our behaviour and ourselves.

It may seem that boundaries would separate us from others, but they really do quite the opposite. A boundary includes a request you make of someone to change a certain behaviour and a consequence of what you will do to self protect if they violate the boundary again.

Because healthy boundaries promote self responsibility and empowerment, they lead to closer relationships with others. By contrast, weak boundaries promote enmeshment and emotional childhood behaviour, which only distances us from others.

Before setting a boundary, you must be clear to yourself about what your personal boundaries are. Most people have a clear line around their home, which makes it easy to know when someone has crossed it. However, many people aren't as clear about their personal boundaries, so others are often unaware that they have crossed one.

# When To Set A Boundary

Boundaries need to be communicated only when someone has violated them. For example, most of us have a boundary that involves not tolerating physical violence but we don't walk around saying "If you hit me, I'll call the police" to people who have never hurt us.

Once a boundary has been violated, we need to communicate to the person that they have crossed a boundary, and clearly state the consequences if they don't stop.

If someone comes into your garden, they have violated a boundary. You can either lose control and yell at them, or you can say, "Hey, you need to leave, and if you don't, I'm going to call the police." By saying this, you're letting them know they have violated a boundary and what action you will take if they continue to do so.

## How To Set A Boundary

*The Request:* Ask someone to stop doing something that crosses your boundary.

*The Consequence:* Tell the person what you will do if they do not comply with your request.

# Why Set A Boundary

The boundaries you set are meant to protect you emotionally, so you need to clearly communicate when a violation has occurred. You may set a boundary with your boss who yells at you by saying, “If you continue to raise your voice at me, I’m going to leave the room until you can speak calmly. If it continues, I will go to HR to discuss the situation.” This ultimately allows your boss to choose how they will behave, but clearly describes what you will do if the violation continues.

*You make a request, give them the option to do whatever they want, and you then follow through with your consequence.*

## Example Of A Boundary

You have a friend who is always late and have been perceiving this as disrespectful. You're close to ending the friendship but instead, you could decide to set a simple boundary, rather than shutting a friend out of your life completely. For example, you could say “I really want to meet you for lunch, but I know you sometimes run late. I’ll wait fifteen minutes for you, but then I’m going to leave. I’m not going to be mad or upset at you—I just don’t want to wait around for more than fifteen minutes.” Setting a simple boundary like this allows your friend to be who she wants to be and behave how she chooses to behave while allowing you to protect yourself, your emotions, and your time.

# When It's Not A Boundary

- You need to be more romantic
- I want my friends to Whatsapp me back when they read my messages
- I want more praise at work
- You need to listen to me more often

*These are manuals, not boundaries*

It's fine to make requests like this of other people, but when your happiness depends on their fulfilling the request, you could have a problem. You cannot expect to control other people, and you don't need to. In these scenarios, the person isn't violating your personal or physical space by not honouring your request, so it's not a boundary issue and it's not appropriate to create a consequence.

Doing so is a form of manipulation or constitutes threatening behaviour. Boundaries should always come from a place of love to promote self kindness.

A boundary is not an ultimatum. It's not a way of controlling another person so that we can feel better. This never works, and it's completely dis-empowering and separating. People don't like being controlled or forced, and the truth is that an ultimatum is actually a boundary violation against the other person.

# Boundary Challenges

Some of my clients don't want to set proper boundaries because they don't want to risk losing relationships. They're afraid that if they take care of themselves and tell the truth, they might make the other person angry. So in order to avoid the other person "losing control," they stay in relationships that are based on lies, pretences, and resentment. This prevents any true intimacy in the relationship.

Having a conversation about the boundary can be uncomfortable and challenging but it's the work of true intimacy. Honouring yourself and what is authentic and true, along with the willingness to let other people interpret it how they will, is difficult but well worth it in the end. People who cannot find the courage to have conversations like this stay in relationships where they're pretending and then wonder why their relationships aren't deep and intimate. Or worse, the relationship erupts in the end because of built up resentment and hostility, and we blame the other person for our lack of boundaries

*People don't need to agree with your boundary.*

Others don't have to understand or agree with your boundary, and you should be prepared for that. When you set the boundary out of love for yourself and the other person, you can tell them your truth without attacking or yelling at them.

Often people won't even be aware of how you were feeling.

# When Someone Else Sets A Boundary

Sometimes we are the ones who have made the boundary violation, and this can be challenging as well. For many people, such a violation triggers thoughts such as “Oh, my gosh! I’ve done something wrong or bad! This person doesn’t want me in their life!”. These thoughts typically cause us to create a lot of drama around the situation, but there’s another way to look at it.

Remember that this person has taken the time to share their truth with you. That’s an intimate and challenging thing to do, and the fact that this person was able to do so says a lot about how they value the relationship.

Setting a boundary requires more courage than simply eliminating someone from your life or continuing to harbour resentment, so take it as a gift and try not to over analyse it. Boundaries are the most amazing, wonderful, and yet difficult things to implement. They are beautiful tools that can create intimacy in relationships rather than blocking it out.

They don’t keep people out of our lives—they simply keep people from violating important spaces. Setting boundaries is about telling the truth to ourselves and to the people in our lives. Also, remember that following through on our consequences 100% of the time is critical to make this tool effective in your life. Finally, remember that if you’re willing to have the courage to honour yourself, tell the truth, and ultimately protect yourself, you will see an increase of peace and intimacy in your life.

# Loveability

You don't need to do anything differently or be different to be loved more.

Your being loved is not about you.

It's about the person loving you.

Your lovability has to do with the other person's capacity to love you, not the other way around.

If your parents didn't love you, it was because they didn't have the capacity to love you.

Your lovability is absolute.

If you don't love them, that's a reflection on you, not on them.

Don't blame yourself for not being lovable. The same is true if you are loved tremendously. It's an indication of the person loving. Not you. You are as lovable as the person's ability to love. The only thing that can change how much someone loves you is their ability, decision, and capacity to love you.

You are as lovable as you will ever be. Infinitely lovable. You always have been.



# Love

Love is an emotion we choose for ourselves.

Love feels good. If given a choice, most of us would choose to feel love toward someone over any other emotion, yet most of us don't consciously choose to feel love. Instead, we choose to feel disappointment, anger, or frustration. We have expectations of people, and when they don't meet those expectations, we use that as an excuse to feel bad. This makes no sense. We create rules that set us up to feel negative emotion instead of something wonderful.

Every time we dislike someone, we are choosing to feel dislike. Dislike doesn't feel good; it's a painful choice but we pretend it isn't a choice at all. We act as though we don't have any control over how we feel toward someone else, and that their actions control how we feel. Our thoughts about others' actions determine how we feel, and when we choose negative thoughts, we will then feel negative emotions.

*Unconditional love = love without conditions*

Unconditional love is not for people who sacrifice: it's for anyone who wants to feel amazing. You can feel love whenever you want so why would you deny yourself that feeling?

# When You Don't Feel Love

Don't beat yourself up if you don't feel love. Ask yourself why you are choosing not to. If you're blaming the other person's actions for your feelings, remind yourself that love is just an emotion that you get to feel and you can feel it privately.

You don't have to tell anyone you're feeling love toward them. You certainly don't have to call up your ex and say, "Hey, I love you".

You don't need to act it out, and you don't have to act kindly if you don't want to. You don't have to do anything you don't want to do, but you get to feel that emotion inside you and you get to own it.

That's what unconditional love is.

It's the ultimate gift you give yourself. And yes, when you're feeling loving, you probably will act kinder to yourself and to other people, but that's just a good side effect. It's not the reason we do it.

Remember, loving unconditionally doesn't mean unconditionally approving of behaviour. It doesn't mean that you don't take any action to protect yourself or get the results you desire in your life. It doesn't mean you have to see someone all the time. It just means that when you think about that particular person, you get to feel love. Because love feels better.