

Boundaries

- All living things have boundaries, beginning with cells.
- We, too, need to know where our emotional “cell membrane” is.
- Doing this involves knowing who we are, what we believe, what we are willing to do and not do, where we end and where others begin.
- Speaking for one’s self is crucial and central to making this happen.
- Defining one’s self can be rehearsed in one’s head but must be **done** in relationship – we must remain connected with others.
- Closely related to self-definition is developing the ability to regulate one’s own emotional reactivity (especially in the presence of a highly reactive person).
- One way of doing this is coming to recognize one’s internal reaction to a threat (anxiety, fear, and anger) and taking responsibility for it.
- Distinguishing between thinking and feeling is part of this process.
- A self-differentiated person (one who has healthy boundaries) takes maximum responsibility for one’s self and minimum responsibility for others.
- Thus the focus of one’s energy is directed toward one’s own functioning, one’s own response to the situation, and one’s own contribution to what is going on.
- Other people with unclear boundaries will quite likely become uncomfortable with our boundary setting at times. This usually means we are on target.
- Failing to set boundaries is not doing someone else a favor.
- Boundaries make the space necessary for love.
- A clear sense of one’s personal boundaries is like having a compass – it tells us if we are on course or not.

by Bart Grooms; based on the theory of Dr. Murray Bowen

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