

*Guide to*

# HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
What are Healthy Boundaries?	3
The Wound of Invasion?	5
Compression in the Energy Body	8
The Effects on Your Physical Body	9
The Effects on Your Emotional/Mental Body	10
Healing the Defense	13
Tools for Healing	14
You are Free!	20
Shame, Blame, Guilt and Anger	21
Journaling Exercises	23
Finding your Healthy Boundaries	25
Relational Boundaries	28
Healthy Boundary Statements	32
Enforcing Boundaries	33
Going Deeper	35

# WHAT ARE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Many people struggle to create healthy boundaries in their relationships. If they weren't modeled for you when you were young, it's hard to know what healthy boundaries even are, let alone what constitutes your particular set of healthy boundaries. Many people I've worked with express deep frustration when they feel they've set a boundary that isn't being honored. They've voiced a need or drawn a line, only to watch the other person step over it or push back. Oftentimes, this happens with their closest family relationships or friendships, where it can feel particularly confusing and disempowering. When it feels like our boundaries aren't being honored, it's tempting to think we must make a choice between having the relationship or having our healthy space.

Even with casual acquaintances, trying to set a boundary can feel unfriendly or harsh. But healthy boundaries are the essence of healthy relationships. You can't have one without the other. Healthy boundaries actually strengthen a relationship. They're not about pushing the other person away, but about sharing the particular choices you're making about your life with another. Boundaries are actually an ***invitation to relationship***. Boundaries let the other person know you're willing to bring yourself into a relational space with them, in a way that honors each of you.

Healthy boundaries start with listening to your inner voice and then letting other people know what choices feel right for you. Boundaries are ultimately the *choices you're making about how you want to live your life*. They outline the amount of physical, mental, emotional and relational space you need to stay in contact with yourself while investing in a relationship. They arise from checking within, listening to your inner voice and then following its wisdom.

Boundaries are the result of *living from the inside-out*. When we live from the inside-out, we know who we are. We can then bring ourselves into relationship with another, without losing our sense of self or contact with our inner knowing.

Boundaries actually help create the energetic container for a relationship to live and move within. Healthy boundaries let the other person know what feels good to you, what you need to take care of yourself, and what you don't want to experience. With boundaries, we can merge in healthy pleasure or common interest for a period of time, and then pull apart again so we can feel the pleasure of our separateness. Like an in-breath and an out-breath, healthy relationship is a dance where we mingle energies, and then separate once again, without any loss of self.



# THE WOUND OF INVASION

*Imagine for a moment you're a child of about three years of age. You're no longer an infant who's totally dependent upon your parents for your survival. In fact, you've mastered many things. You can walk and talk and feed yourself now, and you're really beginning to understand that you're a unique person.*

*You're learning that your parents are also unique individuals who exist separately from you. You even have different opinions about things. Sometimes those opinions clash. Maybe you've learned that magical word "no." You've discovered that you can use that word to make what you want (or don't want) known. You can use that word to define yourself. You can use it to set boundaries, letting in what feels right and keeping out what doesn't.*

*Now, imagine that the adults in your life don't always respond well to your attempts at defining yourself. Maybe there are times when they don't respect your "no." This makes you angry. Maybe it makes you feel bad, or even guilty, especially if the adults aren't just ignoring your "no" but trying to make you feel wrong or bad for it. Do you persist, or do you succumb to their pressure? Do you allow them to define you?*

This is when the **compressed defense** begins to develop. At this age, we all begin the process of defining ourselves. To help us navigate this stage, we need someone who can hold good boundaries for us...someone who can keep us from hurting ourselves or others, while giving us lots of room to explore.

So, what if the adults in your life didn't understand healthy boundaries? What if they couldn't model what healthy boundaries look like? Maybe they were controlling, dominating or self-sacrificing. Maybe they treated you like an extension of themselves. Maybe they put a premium on being "good." Did they try to make you feel bad if you weren't? Were they disappointed? Or maybe you were just encouraged to look outside of yourself for answers ("look at your sister...she always finishes her vegetables...don't you want to be like her?").

Maybe the adults in your life inserted their views into your creative process. Did they finish your sentences for you when you were struggling to connect with how you felt and formulate it into words? When you showed them a drawing or some other creative project, did they wait for you to explain what you'd done or jump right in and tell you what they saw? Or maybe they fought with you over eating, forcing you to finish what was on your plate even if you didn't like it. Perhaps you were coerced to toilet train, rather than being allowed to own the process.

These attempts to define you were **invasive**, even if they were done in good faith by parents who believed they knew what was best for you. This merging of energies caused confusion, right at the time when you were trying to learn about boundaries. Maybe there were even times when the invasion was much more obvious, like physical or sexual abuse, or having to undergo an invasive surgical procedure.

So how did you respond? Did you hold fast to your "no?" Did you stand up to your oppressor? Or did you allow yourself to be compressed? Did you decide it was easier to just give in? To keep the peace? Were you just too small to stop the invasion?

When we're young, it's almost impossible to fend off an invasive adult. Although you may have been trying to define your boundaries, holding those boundaries requires practice and appropriate modeling. It's a skill you hadn't yet developed, and so you experienced the pain of having your field invaded.

As with all defenses, you needed to find a way to survive the situation. Defenses aren't bad or wrong. They are survival mechanisms. So, what could you do?

If expressing your needs, desires or feelings was threatening to the adults around you, maybe you decided it was better to just go along. Even if you resented them, you probably decided it was easier to hold all that resentment in than deal with being invaded again. Maybe you sacrificed what was true for you, compressing your field in order to hold back your unique expression. Perhaps you withdrew, retreating into the body and building walls around yourself to protect from the feeling of being invaded. ***This is the compressed defense.***





# COMPRESSION IN THE ENERGY BODY

Compression causes layers and layers of dense energy to build up in the energetic field. Aggressive or negative energy is turned inward and immobilized. This self-attacking maneuver creates a pervasive overcharge in the field. It builds and builds with no way to release. Like a fortress, these dense layers provide some sense of protection from outward invasion. But because they hold all the negativity in, they also act like a prison, limiting the movement of energy everywhere. The entire field becomes heavy, dense and stagnant.

Despite these energetic walls, true boundaries remain weak or porous. In fact, with compression, it's impossible to even know what your healthy boundaries are. Instead, the energy field learns how to merge with others as a primary way of relating and staying safe. As a result, the energy body is perpetually taking in energy that belongs to someone else. This only perpetuates the feeling of being invaded. It also makes it harder to know what's yours and what isn't.

The entire energy field hunkers down. Underneath what appears to be a calm exterior lies an incredible amount of tension. Like a volcano holding back an eruption, the system remains under a constant state of pressure that cannot be released, but merely *endured*. It can endure and suffer quietly for a very long time. In time, the entire system aligns to *actively resist* release of any kind.





# THE EFFECTS ON YOUR PHYSICAL BODY

Holding an overcharge in the energy body creates thickened muscle or layers of fat in the physical body. These layers limit freedom of movement. Metabolism slows. The shoulders may become rounded and immobile, and the midsection compressed or shortened, as if the body is braced to carry an incredible weight.

Compression may be found in certain areas (neck and waist are common) or throughout the body generally. With the pelvis tucked under to bear the weight, the curve of the lower back and neck may also become flattened. In this way, the body holds the memory of submission. It also develops a strong capacity to endure suffering and carry on.

Compression creates strong tension in the neck, jaw and throat, and puts pressure on the heart. Personal will and authentic voice are strangled in the process. Compression throughout the body places tension on the spine and other joints, chokes the digestive system and causes widespread inflammation or even autoimmune disorders. Obesity related diseases are also common.



# THE EFFECTS ON YOUR EMOTIONAL/ MENTAL BODY

Holding your energy in a compressed pattern makes you feel perpetually *burdened* or *under pressure*. But because the energy is held that way in protection, there's no real way to release it without facing all the negativity locked inside. Consistently compressing yourself and self-sacrificing also causes *resentment*. But resentment only adds more energy to an already pressurized system, so the awareness of it must also be compressed.

With no way to release the pressure, it must be discharged only in small doses, usually through passive aggressive behavior or “breaking point” explosions. With compression, we will endure and endure until the pressure grows too strong to bear. Even then, usually only a small amount of the anger and negativity being held is released...just enough to bring the system back into a tolerable state of quiet (or not so quiet) suffering.

Because the entire defense is designed to “keep the peace,” the real negativity trapped inside can only be released in subversive ways, like “micro-attacking” or sabotaging loved ones in small ways. This kind of behavior can feel very confusing and guilt-inducing when it becomes conscious. There oftentimes doesn't appear to be any justifiable reason for such anger or aggression.

Provoking behavior (that's consciously denied) may also arise. If successful, the other person will respond in a way that “justifies” a release of some of the pent-up anger or negativity. Subtle invitations to invade may also be unconsciously extended. Although the invasion will be resisted on one level, on another level, it may actually feel relieving to have someone push through the layers of dead energy.

Despite all this negativity and subverted aggression, the system is so geared toward maintaining peace, even self-sacrificial relationships may be seen as primary sources of happiness. Most of us believe it's good and right to sacrifice for the people we love, even to the point of pain or suffering for ourselves. With compassion, we willingly become martyrs. This reflexive self-sacrifice creates the perpetual experience of our needs and desires coming last on a long list of responsibilities.

Underneath all the negativity and holding is a secret desire to be free. But because feeling that desire for freedom and sovereignty would require feeling the pain of the original invasion, that desire is rarely conscious or acknowledged. Instead, Life is seen as something that simply must be endured. Relationships are responsibilities that cannot be escaped from. It may feel like you can only be yourself when the other person isn't around. The false choice between *autonomy* and *relationship* seems real, along with the feeling that there really isn't any choice at all anyway. You simply must do what you must do (go to work, pay your bills, etc.).

Pleasure is instead found in the discomfort and restriction. There can be pleasure in complaining, in blaming others, and in denying the free movement of energy, so long as nothing is done to change the situation or clear the cause for complaining. Pleasure can also be found in refusing to share the innermost self. Even when it comes at such a high price, there's pleasure in the inner state of quiet resistance. With compression, ***we win by losing***. We self-sabotage and create suffering for ourselves, taking pleasure in the discomfort or pain that it causes another. In the process, we cannot help but feel shame or even self-hatred.

Despite all this negative pleasure, compression has a swamp-like quality to it that contributes to depression. Fighting against it oftentimes sends you deeper into it. In many ways, the entire structure feels inescapable. Movement and choice are limited, even though we're the ones doing the limiting. In this way, some semblance of choice is held onto. Even when there's a conscious desire for change or self-care, it can feel like pushing against a mountain of inertia. Thick, energetic, prison walls keep us trapped in the feelings of stuckness. We become our own captors, even unto death.



# HEALING THE DEFENSE

**TIME** and **SPACE** are the keys to healing this defense. It was the original process of getting to know yourself that got interrupted. Getting in touch with your core will take some time, space and consistent effort. It's nearly impossible to set healthy boundaries if you don't know what you really need. And you can only understand your unique needs if you know who you are at your core. What works for others won't necessarily work for you. *Each of us is a unique expression.* To start this process, you'll need to let your feelings flow, especially the negative ones. This may feel difficult at first, and likely you'll experience some guilt. Feel the guilt and move through it. Begin by using the affirmation "*I am free. It's safe for me to be who I am. It's safe for me to feel whatever I feel.*"

On the next few pages, you'll find tools you can use every day to support you on your journey of healing compression.



## Committed Self-Care Practices

Finding and keeping a dedicated self-care practice is one of the best ways to heal compression. This can't be something you do once in a while or when there's no housework or all the stars align and you have a free moment. **It has to be first on the list, and it has to be consistent.** Good self-care offers you a way to *connect with yourself*. Massage, yoga, acupuncture, chiropractic care and energy work are all wonderful self-care practices. Self-care can also be as simple as taking a few moments in the morning to stretch and check in with your body. Or going for a walk or journaling. Whatever it is, make it a priority. Give yourself the gift of TIME and SPACE.





## Embrace Your Healthy “NO”

This may seem like an impossible task, but it's crucial to get a little selfish with your time, especially with the people you love or feel obligated to. Practice saying no when something is not in alignment with what you personally desire or would choose for yourself. You probably have a long list of responsibilities that you'll need to reassess. Try to pare the list down to only a handful of things that you truly enjoy doing.

Use the phrase, "Can I get back to you on that?" whenever you're asked if you'd like to do something. This is a great tool that offers you some time and space to check in and see what you really want. Use that time and space to get quiet, feel into your core and pose the question to yourself, "Is this in alignment with my energy?" Wait until you feel a clear yes or no. Take as much time as you need. If the answer is no, find the courage to tell the person it's not going to work for you.

With practice, checking within will become second nature, and saying no will become easier. Your reward will be a more authentic, sovereign life.



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## Exercise

Compressed energy moves when the body moves. Any kind of exercise that gets your heart and body moving will start moving compression. Likely, you'll experience lots of resistance to this. That's the trademark of compression. You know it's good for you, and yet it's so hard to do it!

Take a moment to acknowledge the resistance when you feel it. Sit with it for a minute and make a choice. What do you truly **want**? Sink below the defense to your core. Do you want to be healthy? Do you want to feel better? These are great reasons to push through the resistance. Or maybe what you really need in that moment is a nap. That's OK, too. Sometimes you just need to *sit in the resistance*.

It's helpful to make a commitment and to work towards keeping it, especially with regard to self-care. But be patient with yourself. Offer yourself a "get-out-of-exercise-free" card once per week, and feel no guilt about using it, if you need to.







## Find a Creative Outlet

*Your creative process will evolve, if you allow it the freedom to grow.*

Creativity can offer an incredibly powerful mirror. The process involves first contacting something deep inside of you, and then bringing it out, so it can be expressed in the world of form. Once it has taken form, you can then see what your creation reflects back to you. As you reflect on your creation, you come to know yourself better - the light and the dark.

It doesn't matter what form your creativity takes. Find your spark and follow it. It's helpful to create some structure around scheduling, however. Set aside a specific time every day or week for creative expression. It's better if this activity takes you out of the house, away from your responsibilities, at least a couple times per week.

Once that structure is in place, allow your creativity to flow freely. Oftentimes, especially initially, what emerges may feel dark or dangerous. You may be surprised to have created something you or others would judge as ugly. Do your best to allow your creation to speak, withholding judgement. As you make space for your creation to speak to you, you release some of the compression that's been binding you.

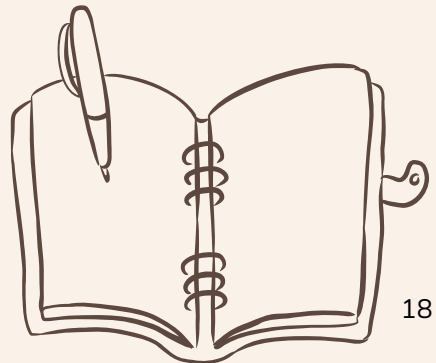


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## Journal

Journaling also offers a mirror and need not take any specific form. An entry could be a list of words, a poem, a drawing, phrases, descriptions of feelings that are coming up without context, or a long rambling monologue about nothing. You could tell yourself your life story or simply make something up. It doesn't matter what it is. The point is to be present with your inner world every day and to be patient as this process unfolds. You are slowly reopening channels to your core.

Resist the temptation to show your journal to anyone during this time, even if something really interesting is revealed. Give yourself ample time to find yourself reflected there before attempting to share what you've found. In time, a clearer picture of who you are, what you truly want, what makes you happy and the kind of people you want to spend time with will begin to take shape.





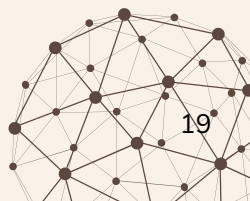
## Energy Work and Affirmations

It's easy to over-ground in this defense and to get stuck in the muck of the material world. To counter this tendency, imagine opening your crown chakra at the top of your head and reaching up. Connecting to source energy through your crown chakra is something everyone can do. Just imagine your crown chakra is a flower opening to the sun or imagine you're sending a cord of white light into the heavens.

If you find yourself attaching or merging with someone (i.e., worrying about them, feeling controlled, obsessing), place your hand upon your solar plexus. Take a deep breath and speak or think the following intention:

*"I now choose to release any energy I've taken in that is not mine. I reclaim all my power of choice and self-direction. I use that power now to heal and balance the energy in my field and physical body."*

If you feel you still have dysfunctional cord connections to your parents that are being used to manipulate or control, consider connecting with a qualified energy practitioner who can guide you through the process of removing them so that healthier cords can develop.





# YOU ARE FREE!

Remember, the compressed defense stands upon the false belief that you're not free. That belief is held in place by a *resistance to being free*. Maybe it feels easier to be trapped. Maybe there's comfort in responsibility and in feeling like you don't have a choice. It's why this defense feels so immovable sometimes. Your will is being used to imprison you. But it can also be used to set you free. This is your work. ***Can you accept your freedom?***



# SHAME, BLAME, GUILT AND ANGER

As you progress on your personal path of healing compression, you're likely to encounter *shame, blame, guilt and anger*.

**SHAME** stems from a primitive fear of being “kicked out of the tribe.” It has a strong physiological effect on the body, usually felt below the diaphragm. It's an attempt to disappear, shut down and hide, so no one can see what you're doing or who you are. You can work with your own feelings of shame by first asking whether your shame “*fits the facts*.” Are you doing something morally wrong? Are you doing something that's endangering the welfare of others? If you feel that you have done something you regret or that harmed another, own your actions and work at forgiveness of self and making different choices going forward. If your shame doesn't “fit the facts,” risk sharing your experience with someone who can witness you without judgement. The more you share with others, the less shame you hold onto.

**BLAME.** With energetic compression and invasion wounding, there's a distortion of accountability and responsibility. Are you blaming someone else for something in your life? Did someone make choices for you because you didn't want to? Acknowledge to yourself that choosing *not to choose* was still a choice. Take ownership of your sovereignty by owning ALL your choices. Sometimes the distortion is in the other direction, where you feel responsible or take blame for other people's choices or experiences. Survivors of abuse oftentimes feel shame for the abuse, when the shame rightfully belongs with the abuser. Put the blame where it rightfully belongs and free yourself from the burden of carrying something that isn't yours to carry. Ask yourself, “where does the blame really belong?” If you've given over your authority and creativity, take ownership of your choices. If someone invaded your field, they are to blame.

**GUILT** is the response you likely learned in childhood when you tried to exert yourself or your freedom of choice in a way that your parents disapproved of. As part of your operating system, you can expect guilt to get triggered whenever you try to say no, make a choice against what someone else wants of you, choose yourself over another, hold a boundary or cut unhealthy ties. The quickest way to reclaim the energy trapped in guilt is to feel the guilt and do what's in alignment with your truth anyway! This will likely feel difficult at first, but each time you choose yourself, you release more of your personal energy that's been trapped and held in guilt.

**ANGER** can and should be felt and released in healthy ways. Anger is a healthy emotion, and the natural and appropriate response when someone crosses a boundary. Anger is a protective emotion. It gives you the energy and the courage to protect yourself from invasion. Allow yourself to express your anger when you feel it, even if it's simply a nonjudgmental acknowledgement that you're feeling anger. Pushing it down traps it in your field. The more you can express your anger in the moment ("I feel angry at what you just did/said..."), the better. Release trapped anger in your body by feeling the anger and moving your body in whatever manner feels good to you. Exercise, punch a pillow, stomp your feet, etc.



# JOURNALING EXERCISES

Following are some journaling prompts to help you connect more deeply with yourself. Consider answering one question each day, as part of your journaling practice.

- Describe a time when you felt fulfilled. What about that moment felt so satisfying?
- If you were given the gift of a year of free time with no limits on spending, what would you do with it?
- List ten things that make you smile.
- How can you be more kind to yourself?
- What are the things in your home that are the most “you”?
- Complete this sentence: “I wish to experience this for the first time...”

- When do you feel drained, over-worked or over-extended? When do you feel uncomfortable?
- What do you do that brings you joy?
- What restores you?
- What self-care practices are important to you?
  
- What keeps you from feeling energized and at peace?
- What keeps you from doing the things that bring you joy?
- What keeps you from your self-care practices or from doing the things that restore you?
- What realistic thing can you do to change this situation?
- Is there someone you need to talk to about this?
- Would taking a break help?
- If so, brainstorm how you can make time for it. Is it possible to set a firm end time for activities, hire someone, or ask a friend or partner to help?
- How else can you make more space for joy and self-care?



*You are here to  
experience life as you  
choose to experience it,  
not to please others.*





# FINDING YOUR HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

- How do I want to eat? What kinds of food make me feel happy and healthy? What kinds of foods make me feel heavy, sluggish or depressed? What kinds of food or substances does my body reject?
- When are the best times for me to eat? As soon as I wake up? Just before bed?
- How often does my body want to eat and how much at each meal? Do I feel better when I eat 3 large meals or 6 small ones?
- What kinds of exercise makes me feel healthy and strong?
- What other benefits does exercise bring me (i.e., stress-relief, time alone, etc.)?
- How often does my body want to exercise? For how long?
- Do I prefer variety or consistency in exercise?
- How much rest do I need to feel healthy and happy? Do I feel better when I go to bed early? Wake up early? Take frequent breaks to re-center? Take a nap?

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- What kinds of experiences bring me joy? When am I happiest?
- When do I feel most creative?
- Where can I most easily express myself?
- What creative outlet brings me the most satisfaction?
- How much music do I want in my life? How much dance?
- Where do I feel most centered and happy? In nature? In a public park or venue? In my own home when no one is around? Out with friends?
- When do I laugh? What kinds of things make me laugh?
- What do I do when I'm angry? What constructive way could I express my anger?
- How do I handle negative or inconvenient emotions? How could I be kinder to myself when I'm struggling with negative emotions?

## MENTAL HEALTH

- What challenges me mentally? What activities can I do to stay mentally sharp?
- What have I always wanted to learn about? What's stopping me?
- How much time do I need to sit and think? To meditate?
- How much TV watching is healthy for me? How much reading?
- Would journaling help me understand myself better? How much time am I willing to commit to it?
- How can I handle the resistance that's bound to come up? Can I find a way to give myself space and also hold myself accountable?
- How do I recharge myself? How often do I need to do this to feel healthy and balanced?
- What quiets my mind?

## RELATIONAL HEALTH

- How much alone time do I need?
- Do I ever feel merged with my partner or friends? If so, why and when does this happen? What could I do to lovingly create more separation?
- How often do I want to socialize? How much is too much? How much is too little?
- What kinds of social activities do I most enjoy?
- How do I feel around large groups? Small groups? One-on-one?
- How much physical intimacy do I want or need to feel connected? How much is too much? How much is too little?
- What kind of intimacy feels healthy and loving to me?
- How much excitement do I want in my relationships? How much is too much excitement? How much is too little?
- What role does aggression and personal will play in my relationships?
- How free do I want to be in relationship? How much freedom am I willing to give my partner?

## SPIRITUAL HEALTH

- How do I connect with my divine spirit?
- When do I feel full of awe?
- When does life feel most meaningful?
- What spiritual practice feels most comfortable and in alignment with who I am? Prayer? Meditation? Attending church? Giving my time to help others? Yoga? Dancing?
- How much time do I need to devote each day in order to feel connected to the divine within me?
- How can I honor my soul each day?
- What practical things can I do to make my spiritual practice a priority?



# RELATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Healthy, relational boundaries can only exist when we're willing to enter into relationship while also fully honoring our own needs. We must remember that a relationship is a shared space, but that it cannot exist without two, separate individuals. Without separation, there can be no true sharing.

To have healthy boundaries, we must know ourselves before we can know another. We must understand our own needs and desires. Each of us is unique. Some people need more physical space, and others need more physical contact. Some people need more downtime, and others need more activity. The degree of emotional sharing that each person can tolerate is different. We cannot enter into a healthy relationship where the needs of another must also be considered, if we don't understand our own needs. We must also be willing to express our needs and say "no" when something in the relational space is dishonoring what our inner wisdom is telling us we need. This can feel vulnerable for both common, boundary distortions.

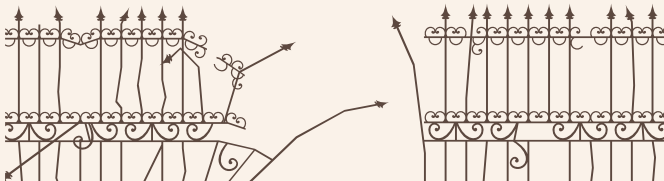
# Boundary Distortions

Difficulty creating boundaries usually involves two distortions.

**Underbounded.** When you're energetically *underbounded*, you lose the connection to yourself in relationship, and then fail to clearly track or state what your boundaries are. You may believe boundaries don't have a place in your relationships, especially your closest ones, or that loving another means giving yourself completely over to the relationship. You may believe being in relationship requires that you offer everything you have.

When we lose contact with ourselves, however, we no longer know what feels right. We can't make sovereign choices, because we've lost our center. In the underbounded state, we merge so completely with the other person, we take their energy in as our own. Some part of us disappears into the relationship, and we lose our capacity to separate. Then, we may inject too much into the relational space or simply "go along" with whatever the other person needs, wants or demands.

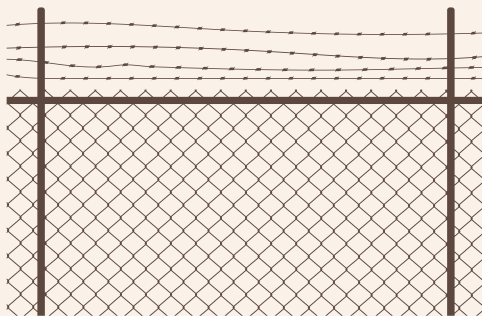
We may feel their struggles as our own. If they're unhappy with us, we have no way to separate and come back to ourselves to decide if we agree with their opinion. If they don't agree with us, we may fight to bring them into agreement out of fear that the relationship is failing. Without a sense of sovereignty and choice, too much of our personal energy is fed into the merged, relational space. As a result, we may feel quietly put-upon, angry or resentful. Even when we attempt to set boundaries, we rely almost exclusively on the other person to honor them (or not). We give over our power of choice.



**Overbounded.** When you're energetically *overbounded*, you've mistaken boundaries for hardened walls. You may state your boundaries with such force and such rigidity, it leaves no room for relationship. In the overbounded state, we create walls to keep others out or break off the relationship entirely at the slightest sign that the other person is doing something we don't like. In the overbounded state, we may believe we have healthy boundaries. We may aggressively defend them, as if they're walls we must prevent an enemy from scaling.

Rather than fostering relationship, as healthy boundaries do, these energetic walls make it impossible to truly connect. As they oftentimes exist within our own energy field, they also keep us bound up inside them. From behind our walls, we cannot fully bring ourselves into the relational space. We don't share who we really are, fearing the other person won't honor our vulnerability.

Although we may state our boundaries in unequivocal ways, many of the boundaries are actually defensive protections designed to prevent deeper relationship. Sometimes, we may even appear to give over to what the other person wants or demands, all the while keeping ourselves internally removed from the relational space altogether.



Expressing boundaries within relationship can feel vulnerable for both distortions. For the underbounded, there may be a fear that in honoring your separateness and stating your needs, you'll be rejected or lose the relationship. There's a risk in claiming your sovereignty and your separateness. For the overbounded, there may be a fear that you'll be overwhelmed, destroyed or swallowed up in the relational space, if you actually share your deeper essence with another in a calm rather than a forceful manner. There's a risk in bringing your more vulnerable self into a shared space.

## Boundary Failures

Most boundary failures are a result of either: (1) not understanding your needs, or (2) not clearly stating them. Sharing our needs and choices may feel risky, but it's the only way to create healthy boundaries and healthy relationship. We must share who we are and what we need in relationship before we'll discover if the other person is willing to honor who we are.

Healthy boundaries result when you listen to your inner voice and stand up for your needs. Whenever you are questioning whether you want to do something or if it's a healthy boundary, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is it aligned with who I am?
2. Is it aligned with what I want to create in my life?
3. Is it aligned with my health?
4. Am I hurting someone? Am I hurting myself?

# HEALTHY BOUNDARY STATEMENTS

Healthy boundaries honor you, the other person and the relational space. They clearly and simply state what you need, what you're experiencing, or what you don't like, while making space for the other person's needs and desires to be considered. Healthy boundaries give both of you the space to say "no" to something that doesn't feel right, without the threat of punishment or emotional withholding. Healthy boundary statements acknowledge the relationship, state when space is needed, and offer space to the other person.

## EXAMPLES:

- *I'm feeling tired. I'm going to go home now and lay down.*
- *I'd love to help, but I can't take on any more right now.*
- *I'd love to hear about that, but I don't think I can take it in right now. Can we find another time?*
- *Do you have time for a long story? I need to vent.*
- *That item is special to me, and I'd rather not share it right now.*
- *I'd love to see you, but I have trouble with the noise level at that restaurant. Can we pick another?*
- *I've been busy all week and need the weekend to myself.*
- *When you belittle my feelings, it makes me not want to share them with you. Can you simply listen to what I'm saying? I'd like to share how I feel with you.*
- *I don't agree with what you're saying, but I respect your opinion.*
- *I'd rather not talk about that now.*
- *Do you have time to help me with something? I'd really like your advice.*
- *I already lent you money, so I'd rather not lend any more.*
- *I want to focus on this right now. Can we find another time to connect?*





# “ENFORCING” BOUNDARIES

You have the right to make choices about your physical space and your belongings, how you spend your time, and how you use your mental, emotional, sexual and spiritual energy. When someone appears unwilling to meet you or honor the needs you’ve clearly stated, then it’s important to remember that boundaries are ultimately a free-will choice about how YOU want to live YOUR life. **Boundaries are choices, not walls that must be defended.** If someone is ignoring a clearly stated boundary around any of your choices, it’s your responsibility to further use your power of choice to protect your sovereignty.

More often than not, there's a simple solution. For example, if you've made it clear that you don't want to share your clothing with a family member who continues to take items from your closet without permission, you can simply place a lock on your door to prevent them from entering your private space. If you've shared your choice not to speak with someone when they're yelling at you, you can simply leave the room if they start. If you've let a family member know you need downtime and they continue to text or call, you can simply silence your phone. How you live your life and spend your time is yours to choose.

Oftentimes, a small action (like leaving the room, installing a lock, etc.) will help the other person understand that you intend to honor your boundaries, even if they do not. When done with the intention to honor yourself (rather than punish or reject the other person), this act becomes an invitation for them to enter into relationship with you in a healthier way. It raises the vibration of the relational container.

Oftentimes, the challenge with boundaries is not that the other person isn't honoring them, but that *we're not honoring them* through taking a simple step we have the power to take. When we fail to honor our own stated boundaries, we're subtly dismantling or weakening the relational container. We're letting the other person know we don't respect the relationship, because we don't respect ourselves. Without a strong container, the relationship is likely to sink into more dysfunctional ways of relating.

Conversely, when we use our power of choice to back ourselves up, we're actually extending an invitation to the other person to enter into a healthier version of relationship with us. We're letting them know we value ourselves and will value them, too. By honoring our choices, we're creating a safer space for relationship to grow.



# WANT TO GO DEEPER?

## Integrative Healing

Integrative healing sessions are a combination of energy work, somatic therapy, breathwork and spiritual counseling. These are one-on-one sessions, performed in person, over the phone, or over Zoom. Please visit [www.sagehillhealing.com](http://www.sagehillhealing.com) for more information or to book a session.

## Energy Medicine

Trauma and blocked emotion can cause blocks within your energy field, which not only impacts your physical health, but keeps you locked in limiting emotional, relational and behavioral patterns. Oftentimes, these patterns are rooted in earlier, painful experiences. Some of the energetic healing modalities I use include:

- sound healing
- relational cord restructuring
- astral clearing
- guided visualization/meditation
- ancestral work
- chakra restructuring
- energetic initiations

## Psychosomatic Process

*Core Energetics*, developed by John Pierrakos, MD, is a synthesis of body-centered psychotherapy and spiritual development. Breathwork, simple movements and exercises are designed to create awareness, increase charge, contain energy and release blocks. Some of the somatic techniques I use include:

- breathwork
- slow movement and body mindfulness exercises
- stretching
- expressive movement to release held emotions
- vocalization
- grounding, charging and discharging postures



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