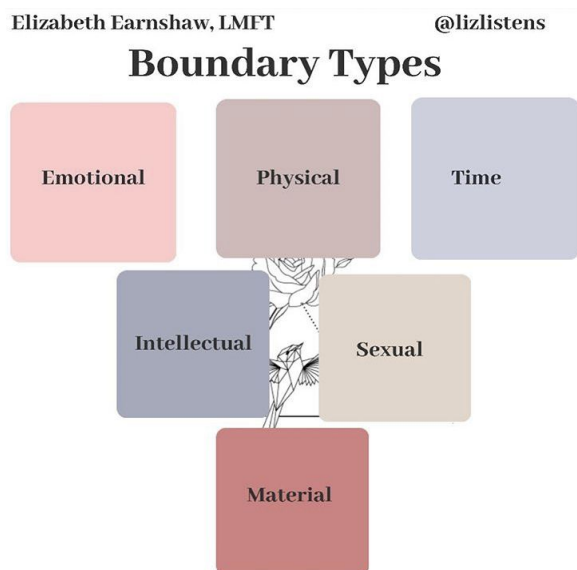


BOUNDARIES 101



Boundaries are what happen when you can sense yourself, what you need, want AND access your voice to speak to those things.

We all have limits and we all experience “violations” of those limits.

Most of the time people aren’t trying to violate your limits – they just don’t know *(this is not the case of severe boundary violations, like rape – they know and they are violating anyway).

The only way to learn to comfortably relate with others is to offer guidance in how you want to be related with.

The above image shares a few “boundary” categories–

- Physical – this includes space, touch, and physical needs.
- Emotional– this includes feelings. They are violated when we are dismissed or criticized for a feeling. They are also violated with oversharing or “unhealthy” vulnerability.
- Intellectual– these boundaries can be violated when your thoughts & curiosity are shut down. Respectfulness and willingness to dialogue and understand is important here.
- Sexual– healthy sexual boundaries include consent, agreement, respect, understanding of emotional and physical sexual desires and preferences, privacy and so much more.
- Material– this refers to material items– if someone destroys your things or doesn’t return them it’s a boundary violation. It can also be a violation to borrow money endlessly and not return it. I also believe it’s a violation to use your materials to manipulate your relationships *(do as I say or you won’t get money, for example).
- Time– your time is valuable. How is it utilized? Do you have enough of it! Do you say “no”? Do you prioritize? Do you value the time of other people?

Boundaries at work sound like:

"I can't do that project at this time."

"I have an idea I would like to share".

"I have office hours from 2-4. You can come back then."

"Let me check my calendar and get back to you."

"I'll check for the e-mail on Monday."

"I can't meet at 5:30 but I can..."

"I'd like to meet for a review of my performance..."

Unplug

Charge for your time



Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT
@lizlistens

Here is a gentle reminder that you don't always have to be available, that you don't always have to be a part of the race and that it's okay to wait to respond to the email.

❖ It's okay to rest.

➔ It's okay to prioritize and to say "no" to the things that don't fit within those priorities.

I've found that the more I give myself permission to step away, the better I do in my work life, anyway.

When you are working, it's okay to say no, to ask for what you need, to request feedback, to set limits, and to speak up and get heard.

If you struggle with work boundaries, I hope the above list gives you a few ideas of how you can say no or offer alternative options. It's DEFINITELY more than okay to get paid for your time.

When people set boundaries with you, it's their attempt to continue the relationship with you. It is not an attempt to hurt you.

~Elizabeth Earnshaw

Someone asked me a question in my Q+A yesterday that reminded me of this brilliant quote by Elizabeth Earanshaw.

→ “I’m an anxious type and the word BOUNDARY freaks me out. I’m afraid of loss of connection. Any tools?”

When someone sets a boundary with us, it's because they most likely want to maintain a connection with us. It's because they need to tend to a certain part of themselves so that they can be more available and present for us and the relationship. Otherwise, they wouldn't be expressing the boundary at all. Otherwise, they might end the relationship all-together or simply distance themselves from us.

I think most of us automatically assume that boundaries will mean that there will be some kind of a rigid wall between us. We fear that the connection might be less intense and more distant. We might even interpret the boundary to mean something “bad or wrong” about us and add all kinds of false assumptions that most likely aren't true.

It takes trust for people to set boundaries with us. It takes vulnerability to expose our limits and needs to other people. It takes courage to speak them especially because we don't know how our limits will be responded to.

And don't get me wrong, some people do use walls in the place of boundaries.



Any People Pleasers out there?
You developed a pretty genius coping mechanism, thank you very much. People pleasing is a skill. The ability to read others. The ability to feel sensitive towards their needs. To keep yourself in their good graces.

But it can also cause some problems - It is the "behind the scenes" anxiety you feel when you disagree. The even stronger anxiety when you believe you upset someone. Not just sometimes. But, most of the time.

The likelihood your opinion won't be taken into consideration.

Over the years, "people pleasers", might even forget or feel confused about their own preferences and opinions.

And while it might cause challenges for autonomy and boundary setting, it was a highly intelligent way to manage a fear of rejection or abandonment as a child.

If you're a people pleaser it doesn't necessarily mean you had a bad childhood. You might have had an awful childhood with abusive parents. Or you might have had a lovely childhood with good enough parents that did their best. It's possible to become a people pleaser either way.

What it does mean is that you likely feared rejection or abandonment. Perhaps you experienced a separation in your family, an emotionally distant parent, a parent that had to work a lot or that got sick.

Maybe you had a parent sensitive to criticism or disagreement.

Maybe you had a parent that was abusive so speaking up was scary.

Whatever the reason, you decided early on that if you could be "easy going" it might create more harmony and a more secure attachment. Perhaps it even *worked*.

Now, you might experience hyper-awareness of the needs and feelings of others and hypo-awareness of your own needs and feelings.

You might get along with a lot of people, but at what expense?

My challenge to you is to feel empowered by this survival skill you developed. Find ways to balance the parts of it you love with the parts of you that might be underdeveloped (setting boundaries & speaking up when you have a need or opinion).

How to stop people pleasing:

1. Build internal validation
2. Work on saying “no” in low risk situations.
3. Write down your goals.
4. Take pause before you respond.
5. Use direct instead of indirect language.
6. Know your limits



Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT
@lizlistens

Being in people pleaser mode ALL. OF. THE. TIME is exhausting and leaves you out of the equation.

If it goes on for too long without being checked you might even lose your own sense of self.

Here are some places that you can start balancing your kindness, awareness, and empathy so that you and the people you're in a relationship with feel better *(yes, your people pleasing doesn't always feel great for them, either):

- 1. Build internal validation Do activities that make you feel good. Set goals and work towards them. Be around people that are kind and do not overtake you.
- 2. Work on saying “no” in low risk situations. Start saying “no” to small things first. “Do you

want pizza tonight?” , “no thanks, I’m in the mood for Chinese”.

- 3. Write down your goals. Write down what you want! It’s easier to keep your heart focused on it when it’s written down. Look at it frequently so that you remember.
- 4. Take a pause before you respond. People pleasers agree to things too quickly in order to dispel anxiety. If someone says “hey! Can you help me on a work project!” Don’t say “sure! I’d love to!” right away. Come back to the message in a few hours and decide what you’d truly like to do. People pleasers often regret being too quick to agree.
- 5. Use direct instead of indirect language. Take out words like “just” and apologies. “I just wanted to check in about...” can turn into “I’d like to know...” and say “excuse me” instead of “I’m sorry” when you need to get around someone in a store.
- 6. Know your limits. You can have limits. Know what they are. How do you know you’ve given too much? What violates your boundaries?
- 7. Remind yourself that reactions to your boundaries are a reflection of them.

Which of these have you tried? What would you like to try to do this week?

If you frequently feel resentment or guilt when in the presence of someone it could be a sign that your boundaries have been crossed



@lizlistens
Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT

Resentment & guilt can be signs that your boundaries have been crossed.

Guilt can be a response to a boundary violation when someone explicitly or implicitly states that you are responsible for their feelings or failings. They are violating your emotional boundaries.

This might look like “I’m so unhappy with the path you chose. It breaks your dad’s and my heart” when you decided to become an artist instead of a doctor. Also, “if I wasn’t so focused on you all the time I would have gotten that raise at work!”

These types of things can evoke guilt even though they shouldn’t. This response is often developed in your family of origin when you’re constantly made to feel guilty for other people’s experiences.

In your adult relationships it will look like over responsibility for others feelings and outcomes. When you’re not able to “successfully” keep them happy then you’ll feel guilty.

When you feel guilty, ask yourself - did I truly do something here to feel guilty about? If the answer is “yes” make amends but if the answer is “no” explore if your boundaries are being violated.

Resentment is another warning sign that boundaries are being violated. If you frequently feel yourself feeling resentful it’s likely that you have overextended yourself or have offered things that you don’t truly feel comfortable offering.

Remember that it’s okay to say “no” and that pushing yourself beyond limits is not how we show love.

Boundaries are *love*.

Your limits and boundaries are deeply
personal.

They are your own.

You do not need to compare them to the limits
& boundaries of other people.



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Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT

Learning to set boundaries means to
tune in with yourself.

To begin to notice what feels
comfortable and what feels
uncomfortable.

What makes one person
uncomfortable might be totally cool
with you and vice versa.

Boundaries are influenced by your
personality, preferences, and life
history.

Context also matters - maybe you're
okay with something with friends but
not at work.

Pay attention to your feelings -
discomfort, resentment and guilt are
often a byproduct of not having your
boundaries or limits respected.

And, remember, your limits are always
your own. You get to decide.



How to redistribute the mental load

1. Make it visible.
2. Stop delegating.
3. To take on more of the load: be mindful
4. To give up the mental load: let go & eliminate.
5. Speak up when you're taking on too much.
6. Allow people to develop competence. Allow them to see, think, and be uncomfortable.
7. Keep boundaries with yourself & others.
8. Outsource
9. Discuss the impact.



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Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT

Many wonder how to change the mental load within their families.

I want to call out the elephant in the room with these tips - most of the beginning stages of changing the mental load is AGAIN put on the person bearing the mental load.

This is unfair. I don't claim to have the answers of how to realistically do it differently at this point in time.

These are things I did in my own marriage and they have benefited me greatly. It annoyed me to be the person bringing it up (I worried about it, researched it, noticed it - you know - just all the fun mental load stuff).

But, bringing it up and making the invisible become visible changed so much for myself, my husband, our marriage, and our family.

I don't want to sound hyperbolic but reading the Emma Clit cartoon to my

husband has probably been the most significant game changer in my life.

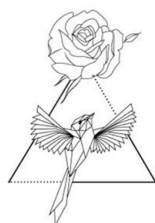
Here are the three reasons it's changed things so much for me:

- 1. I brought awareness to how much I was doing what didn't need to be done or how much I was doing "invisibly" to maintain control that could have been discussed and managed out in the open.
- 2. It offered my husband an opportunity to be successful with me and in our marriage and he totally rose to the occasion.
- 3. I am far less stressed and more trusting. I believe things will get done and if they don't I've seen that we will survive.

Just a gentle reminder - these tips will only work if your partner truly cares to listen to you and wants you to have a wellbeing.

So, you can try these but it takes two to tango and your other half will be responsible for listening and acting.

**When people set boundaries with you
it's their attempt to continue the
relationship with you. It is not an
attempt to hurt you.**



-Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT
@lizlistens

When people set boundaries with you
it's their attempt to continue the
relationship with you in a way that
feels healthy to them.

The alternative is no boundaries,
harbored resentment or conflict
avoidance and relationship cut off.

You, of course, get to also decide if
you want to set boundaries or want to
continue a relationship with them.

How to respond to people that aren't respecting your boundaries:

Ignore their response or walk away.

Use the "Broken Record Technique".

Be Curious, "Can you explain to me why you're having a tough time with this?"

Share your own experience "When you respond that way it makes it hard for me to communicate what I need."

Decide to limit or cut off contact.

Remind yourself you are in charge.



-Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT

If someone doesn't respect a boundary you set, there is no one size fits all response.

Sometimes, they refuse because they are being toxic and don't have our best interests at heart. Sometimes they refuse because they don't know any better.

You have to decide on your response based on your own needs & your understanding of the relationship.

Here are some different techniques that you can try out:

→ Ignore their response or walk away - if you're dealing with someone that doesn't have your best interest at heart, is toxic towards you, or there is no "winning" with them then you can always choose to walk away or ignore their response. Asserting your boundary was enough and you don't need to say anything else.

→ Use the "Broken Record Technique" - this works well when people just won't stop pushing. The broken record technique is exactly as it sounds. You just keep repeating yourself like a broken record. "Oh Cersei, I know you want your throne but you just can't have it". "Yes, I know it's hard but I'm still not going to give you the throne." . "I hear you. But I can't give that to you."

(Continued...)

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-Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT

- Share your own experience - Again, with people you have a safe relationship with, it's okay to be a bit more vulnerable about how it made you feel when they didn't respect or listen to your boundary.
- Decide to limit or cut off contact - for people that just do not get it and do not want to get it, it's okay to cut contact.
- Remember, you're in charge.

- Be Curious - with people that you have a loving and intimate relationship with, sometimes it can be beneficial to use this moment to understand each other better. I might say to my mom "you know, I am not okay with Baby G having so much chocolate at your house" and then she might feed him chocolate anyway. Because I usually have a good relationship with her, I might say "can you help me understand what was going on that you gave him chocolate even when I said not to?" Maybe she'll say "I don't know I just always had a dream of being a fun grandma!" This doesn't mean it's okay or that I'll allow that much chocolate but maybe I can empathize with my boundary impacting her dream. Perhaps we can come together on that.

Respecting boundaries sounds like:

"No problem!"

"I respect that."

"You're right. I went too far".

"That sounds great! We will have fun either way!"

"I am happy to give you the space you need".

"Thanks for your offer".

"I am having a tough time with that response but I respect it completely".

-Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT

Part Deux:

It takes two to tango - we can talk about setting boundaries all we want but are we also respecting them?

I always like to remind people - don't read what you find empowering and apply it to yourself and read what you find uncomfortable and apply it to others.

It feels good to say "I'm learning to set boundaries!" but not as exciting to say "I'm learning respect them".

No one likes to believe they disrespect boundaries, but we all do it to some degree.

We try to convince people to drink with us when they've said no.

We ask people "is there anything I can do to convince you?!" when they've said they can't commit to a project.

We hear our parents say we need to relieve them from babysitting duty at 4PM and we get home at 4:45 because "they'll understand".

We ask professionals to waive certain fees or to give us free labor, even when they've made their costs clear.

We divulge other people's secrets & private information to friends & family

We ask people to do work during their personal time.

Sometimes, we guilt people. "Oh, okay, I can respect that, I guess... sighhhhh"

Sometimes we punish by cutting off.

The more we learn to set boundaries the more imperative it is that we learn to respect them.

And, while it might not be comfortable to consider the ways you've disrespected boundaries it's important for your relationships.

The more you set & respect them the healthier they will be.

Elizabeth Earnshaw, LMFT

@lizlistens

Signs you might need boundaries with your parent

They don't treat you with a basic level of consideration, respect, or kindness.
 Limited capacity for empathy or self centered
 They use guilt, shame, or money to exert control
 They are emotionally reactive
 They are aggressive (or passive aggressive)
 They are critical
 They don't take responsibility for their part
 They are demanding
 They are cruel (to you or others)
 They are enmeshed
 Spending time with them feels bad
 They are manipulative



Setting boundaries with parents can feel uncomfortable. For many people it can elicit guilt, shame, or fear among many other emotions.

It might also elicit judgment from other people that have healthy relationships with their parents or whom haven't come to terms with the dysfunction they face in their child/parent relationship.

Here's the thing - we need boundaries in ALL of our relationships. It's how we let people know where we stand & how they can be successful with us. It prevents resentment.

But, in particular cases you ESPECIALLY need boundaries because the relationship is unhealthy. The hope is that the other person sees and hears your boundary, learns to respect it, and the relationship continues.

Sometimes, the boundary will uncover that this isn't possible and then you'll need to decide what to do next. This is a list of a few reasons you might need to get serious about boundary setting with a parent:

- They don't treat you with a basic level of consideration, respect, or kindness.
- Limited capacity for empathy or self centered.
- They use guilt, shame, or money to exert control.
- They are emotionally reactive.
- They are aggressive or passive aggressive.
- They are critical.
- They don't take responsibility for their part.
- They are demanding.
- They are cruel (to you or others).
- They are enmeshed.
- Spending time with them feels bad.
- They are manipulative.