

Preparation for G161—Finding Our Boundaries

Do you have a hard time standing up for yourself? Do you keep agreeing to do things that you really don't want to do? Do you tolerate rude comments or pushy people because you can't handle conflict? Do you take things personally?

According to author Pia Mellody in her book *Facing Codependence*, “boundary systems are invisible and symbolic ‘fences’ that have three purposes: (1) to keep people from coming into our space and abusing us, (2) to keep us from going into the space of others and abusing them and (3) to give each of us a way to embody our sense of ‘who we are.’”

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1. Oprah Winfrey’s website suggests that you discover some of your own boundaries by completing the following sentences. (The phrases in parentheses may help jump-start your own list.)
 - People may not: (go through my personal belongings, tell racist or homophobic jokes in my company ...)
 - I have the right to ask for: (peace and quiet while getting a massage, help around the house ...)
 - To protect my time and energy, it's OK to: (take my time returning calls or emails, bow out of a volunteer activity ...)
2. What do you gain—and what do you lose—by enforcing these boundaries you’ve set for yourself? (For example, if one of your boundaries is not taking work home, might there be repercussions in other areas of your life.)
3. Your boundaries may differ in different situations and with different people—family, friends, acquaintances, coworkers, etc. How do your boundaries change situationally? Are you able to set boundaries in some areas of your life, but not others?
4. Learning how to set boundaries is a necessary step in learning to be a friend to yourself. Using that as a measure, how good a friend are you to yourself?
5. Tell a story about how you dealt with having one of your boundaries challenged.
6. What are some boundaries—in personal relationships, at work, at church—that are relatively easy for you to maintain? Which are those that are more difficult? Can you think of some ways you can graciously and directly make your boundary clear to others without defending, debating or explaining?
7. Often we look at boundaries only in terms of saying “no” and walling things off. Consider that they—like Lenten sacrifices—can also be a way of making space for letting something new into our lives.