

Boundaries in Relationships

St. Vincent Hospital Bariatric Surgery Support Group

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❖ **Introduction**

❖ **What are Boundaries?**

➤ Relational Boundaries

- Determine who are safe people to let into our lives and the appropriate interactions and behaviors will permit from them.

➤ Physical Boundaries

- Choosing who can touch us, how and where we can be touched – how close others can get and what they can do.

➤ Emotional Boundaries

- Limit what we let in and let out that provokes feelings. Determine *how we let people treat us*, including the range of personal comments that we will accept from others.

❖ **How are Boundaries Learned or Not Learned?**

➤ Family Roles

- Addict – medicates pain and bad feelings with addictive behavior
 - ◆ Dependent, shifts blame, uses anger, denial, harm, rigidity, hostility, self-righteousness, perfectionism, over-achieving, etc.....
- Hero – often oldest child – maybe youngest
 - ◆ Provides a sense of worth for the family. People pleasing, approval seeking, helpful, over-achieving, intellectual, little parent.

- Scapegoat – rebellious, strong peer alliance away from family, feeling of not belonging.
 - ◆ Carries blame and pain, rebellious, defiant, blaming, acting out, trouble maker, withdrawing, legal problems, suicide risk
- Lost Child – often middle child.
 - ◆ No problems, the good child, quiet, shy, withdrawn, invisible, loner, super-independent, eating disorders, bed-wetting, promiscuity.
- Mascot – often the youngest.
 - ◆ Provide relief by acting cute or funny, immature, not taken seriously, seem fragile and needing protection.

➤ Secret family rules

- Don't talk about it
- Shift blame
- Pretend everything is OK

➤ Poor boundaries learned though:

- Too few or too weak rules or limits
- Too many, too rigid, too inconsistent rules or limits
- Rescue from consequences

❖ **How/Why are Boundaries Violated?**

- “We violate boundaries when we fail to do the things we are supposed to do, do the things we are not supposed to do, and allow others to impose on us what is not ours to do.”

- Fear of what others think is evidence of false selves – our adaptive child vs wounded child vs functional adult

❖ **Why Do We Care?**

- YES and NO empowers and defines us.
 - “NO is a chisel against the shapeless rock of codependency.”
- Boundaries empower intimacy
- Boundaries keep us out of the victim role
 - “If we are living out of shame, we will live in fear of conflict. If we live in fear of conflict, we are more likely to live in isolation. If we can’t isolate, we will do whatever we can to avoid conflict.”
 - Victim-----Assertion-----Aggression
- Consequences
 - Give up power or take too much power over others
 - Became responsible for parents or others
 - Deny our own basic needs and wants
 - Vulnerable to whatever contains our feelings
 - Isolation
 - Minimal sense of self
 - Hurt others – intentionally or unintentionally
 - Internalized rage
 - Expect little from others but expect perfection from ourselves

Reference: O'Neil , M.S., Newold, C.E. 1994. Boundary Power: How I Treat You, How I Let You Treat Me, How I Treat Myself. Sonlight Publishing, Nashville, TN.

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