



INTEGRATE TO LIVE

Restore Resilience. Cultivate Community. Impact your World

Week 28 Transcript: Boundaries

This week, we continue to increase our relational skills by learning how to create and maintain healthy boundaries.

Boundaries create safety in relationships. They help us enjoy our similarities and respect our differences without blurring the line between where one person ends and the other begins.

Earlier in the program, when we talked about approaching anger with acceptance and curiosity, I acknowledged that oftentimes anger shows up when someone has crossed a boundary, or when we have not honored our boundaries within ourselves.

Sometimes we are the ones crossing our own boundaries and making allowances for things that are against our core values. Therefore, it's important for us to look at boundaries from both directions.

Boundaries need to be flexible, but have substance. It's best if they're not too rigid or too chaotic. In the process of establishing boundaries, it may be helpful to refer back to the metaphor of the River of Integration.

On one side of the river is chaos and on the other side is rigidity. When integrated, we're in the flow of the river that has a sense of harmony. It's flexible, adaptive, coherent, energized and stable.

In certain situations, with a very unhealthy individual, there may need to be a firm boundary. Otherwise, it makes for a healthier connection when our boundaries are clear, but flexible.

Let's take a look at the process of developing healthy boundaries.

The first step is understanding what we're feeling. We have to be able to connect with, and acknowledge how we're feeling, in order to know where our boundary is.

If someone says or does something that impacts us negatively, but we're in a pattern of dismissing our feelings, it's challenging to know where the boundary needs to be in that relationship.



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Slow down, pause, and recognize what you are feeling. Do you find that you are consistently frustrated in a certain situation at work? Are you feeling defeated or disempowered in a specific relationship? Are you annoyed with yourself?

These are clues that you may need to define, or renegotiate, your boundaries.

The second step is understanding where we end and the other person begins. Even in our most intimate relationships, it's important to maintain a separate sense of ourselves. This is called joining vs. merging.

Merging is when we can't determine the distinction between ourselves and another person. Sometimes we merge because we are trying to make that person feel better so that we can feel better or we try to take on their burden.

We may merge to avoid conflict – “sure, I can do whatever you want. No problem.” Other times, we merge without knowing because that's how we learned to relate to others. We may have had a parent who demanded we merge with them to help them calm down and feel better.

Joining is standing with someone in what they want, what they are feeling or whatever expectation they may have, and making a distinction between what's theirs and what is ours.

It's recognizing “That's your feeling or request or demand, and it's not mine”. With this distinction, we can connect with someone without blurring the boundary lines and creating confusion. And, with a clear boundary line in place, we can more easily make decisions that align with our core values.

The third step is understanding how our boundary has been crossed. Did the other person overstep our boundary? Did we dishonor our own boundary? Did we not have a boundary in the first place and the other person just kept creeping into our space or asking more from us?



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One of the biggest ways we do this is saying “yes” when we mean to say “no” and saying “no” when we want to say “yes”. How many times has someone made a request and you blurted, “Sure!” after you had already made the decision to do the opposite?

It’s very common, and we all do it. That’s why it’s essential to clarify our “yes’s” and our “no’s” in every season of life and choose to make boundaries accordingly.

The fourth step is understanding what the boundary is that needs to be established. Now that we’ve been able to determine how the boundary is being crossed we can decide what needs to be done about it.

A simple way to approach this is asking the question, “what am I saying no to?” This will help us recognize what the boundary is that needs to be established. Remember, not too rigid and not too chaotic.

The fifth step is communicating the boundary clearly and effectively. Avoid using always/never language. It’s not flexible, nor is it realistic. Likewise, boundaries don’t often include ultimatums.

Be specific. Use clear language and stay away from vague boundaries like, “do the dishes sometimes”. In order to give others a fair opportunity to respond in a new and different way to our needs and requests, we must be specific and deliberate in the way that we ask.

It’s important to hold ourselves and others accountable for honoring and respecting these boundaries. If someone is unable or unwilling to honor your boundaries, you are likely in a power dynamic with them like we explored on the Karpman Triangle.

Disengage from the dynamic. Take responsibility for your actions and reactions. Identify where you are operating in your power identity and your disempowered identity and practice establishing healthy boundaries from a place of empowered and resilient choice. Express your boundary from your Empowered Identity.



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Creating and maintaining healthy boundaries helps us reality check expectations and know when to say yes and when to say no. Stay connected as we all put these new concepts into practice and download the action guide to support your process this week. Let's all share what we're learning on our group page.