

# Clarifying Boundaries

*Compiled by Williams Loveless*

Your boundaries define who you are, what special role you play at the moment, what you can and cannot do while you are in that role, what you will and will not accept in others' treatment of you. without clear, firm boundaries, you are at constant risk of being victimized by others and yourself.

Question: *When is it important to define and protect your boundaries?*

Answer: *Whenever you are dealing with anything that breathes.*

Setting limits is essential with your kids, your spouse, your friends, your dates, your pet, the appliance repairman, your in laws, your parents, the salesman--everyone. It is your job to educate people how to treat you. If you ignore their lateness, overlook their snippiness, pretend you don't notice their rudeness, or give in to their manipulations, you are silently telling them "This is something you can do to me." Ignoring what hurts is how we become and remain victims of others.

## **Boundary dissolving experiences**

1. Being given no personal privacy
2. Being noticed or rewarded only for doing things for others
3. Being given no trust and having to account for every action
4. Being punished for independent thinking
5. Being ignored when speaking
6. Any experience that prevents development of a clear sense of self

## **Boundary-crossing tactics (Devices that others employ which threaten your chosen boundaries)**

1. Censure: Making you feel guilty for not meeting expectations or needs
2. Intimidations: A nasty tactic, yelling, screaming, and threatening
3. Withdrawal: "I'll freeze you out" or disappear

4. Seduction: Derailing discussion and changing the issue
5. Flattery: Beware of phony baloney
6. Fast talk: Using high pressure salesman-style approach, no time for answers
7. Sympathy-gaining ploys: The world's needs greatly exceed your personal supply.

**Building boundaries (What will help)**

1. Self awareness: You are clear about what you will and won't compromise
2. Self acceptance: You've assessed your needs and wishes and find them legitimate
3. The ability to communicate your preferences, needs, and limits; yelling, whining, pouting, angry confrontation never helps; face to face is best.
4. A context where someone will listen and hear you.
5. Enduring conflict when the boundary you have set causes inconvenience to others.

**List your boundary issues. For each one, explore an acceptable, workable solution. Samples are shown below.**

*Where to go for dinner: no problem*

*Being honest with money: problem*

*Being controlling isn't a problem*

*Lying to control other people's right to choose by imposing your will on them: major boundary issue.*