

Boundaries: Where You End & I Begin

Author: Anne Katherine, 1991



Healthy Boundaries: A healthy boundary preserves your individuality, your *you*-ness.

Boundaries

Your history, experiences, personality, interests, dislikes, preferences, perceptions, values, priorities, skills – this unique combination defines you as separate from others – it is your uniqueness, your *you*-ness. Emotional boundaries protect this complex.

- Emotional boundaries define the self
- Assaults to boundaries threaten the self

What strengthens emotional boundaries?

- The right to say no
- The freedom to say yes
- Acceptance of differences
- Enhancement of our uniqueness
- Permission for expression

What harms emotional boundaries?

- Ridicule
- Contempt
- Sarcasm
- Mockery
- Scorn
- Belittling feelings
- Stifling communication
- Insistence on conformity
- Arbitrariness
- The need to over-power
- Heavy judgments
- Any kind of abuse
- Abandonment
- Threat
- Insecurity

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“There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself.” H. Thurman

How We Deny Our True Self

- Pretending to agree when you disagree
- Concealing your true feelings
- Going along with an activity that you really don’t want to do and never stating your preference
- Declining to join an activity you really want to do
- Pushing yourself beyond your limits
- Working too hard
- Working too long
- Doing too much for others
- Not resting when tired
- Ignoring your needs (emotional, medical, physical)
- Not eating regular, healthy meals
- Insufficient sleep
- Too little or too much alone time
- Too much or too little exercise
- Insufficient contact with people who really care about you
- Insufficient or too many leisure activities
- Using chemicals to avoid yourself: nicotine, alcohol, caffeine, sugar, pills, drugs
- Using compulsions to avoid yourself: eating, starving, exercise, work, shopping, spending, TV, sex, games, sports – all can be done compulsively

If you are painfully familiar with the above examples, you likely learned to sacrifice your true opinions to survive some unhealthiness in your original family. Denying your true self feels safer, but it comes at a cost to your vitality, creativity and happiness. You may find yourself repeating struggles from your original family by having endless issues with your bosses, friends, co-workers, spouses, and children. Therapy to help you resolve these issues is the way out of the confusion and pain.