

PRACTICING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

For healthy relationships and radical self-care

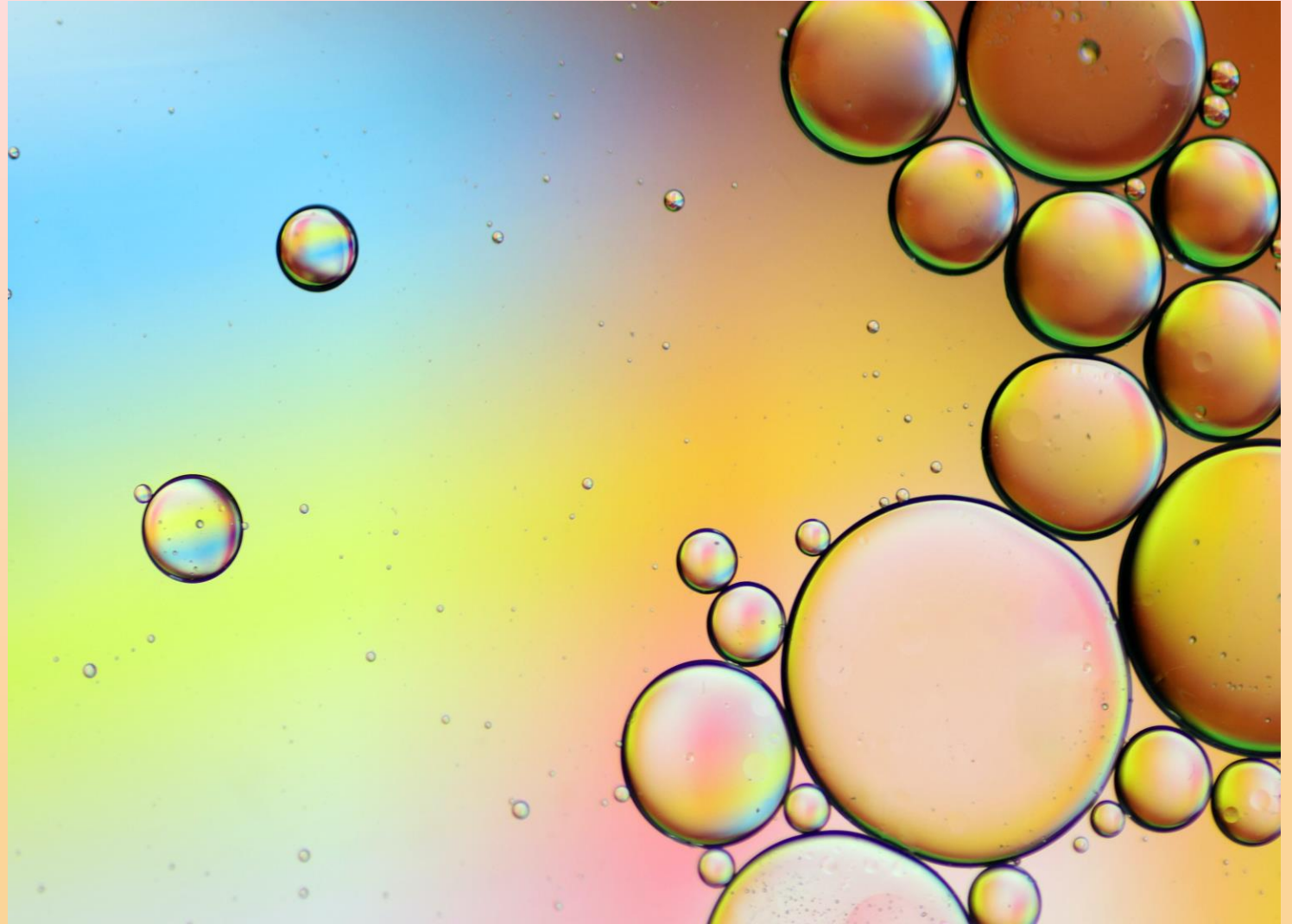


Dr Mendy Neralic

- Clinical psychologist in private practice
- Holistic counselling and coaching
 - Integration of somatic / body-based, cognitive psychotherapies, self awareness, mindfulness and spiritual practices
- Making the unconscious conscious
 - active agent in your own life
 - choosing how you respond to life's challenges
- Healing and overcoming old hurts and traumas – taking responsibility, changing life-long patterns, and self-empowerment

Boundaries are the
dividing lines
between us and
others, symbolising
where we end and
someone else
begins

Pixie Lighthorse



BOUNDARIES ARE RELATIONAL

- Relationships are where you test your capacity to give and receive
- Function to protect, screen and contain
- Healthy boundaries cultivate **wellbeing, trust and safety** in your relationships and within yourself
- Unhealthy boundaries create relationship experiences that are **draining, frustrating, distressing, harrowing, dangerous**

BOUNDARIES ARE RELATIONAL

How you've learnt to relate and enact your boundaries is rooted in your history

- Adaptive strategy to navigate your early relationships + fit into your “original” culture – CONDITIONING ~ HABITUAL
- Weren't taught to be empowered but to comply
- Required to fiercely protect yourself

BOUNDARIES WORK

- Become AWARE of your PARTICULAR habits in relationships and in setting and responding to limits
- TAKE RESPONSIBILLITY ~ Personal and spiritual growth comes from revising your conditioning to live a life of your own choosing

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- You know you have a choice
 - To protect, to screen out , to contain
 - To say “yes” or ”no” based on your **own preferences, desires, needs, rights and values**
- You know that everyone has boundaries
 - Respect others boundaries + protect others from your own ”projectiles”
 - The exchange between Self and others feels fair and equal - “clean relationship”
- Have a sense of yourself as separate and connected at the same time
- Flexible and shift according to your needs, preferences, the situation, the person – RESPONSIVE
 - Acknowledge and accept differences of opinion, thoughts, desires, emotions without disconnecting
 - Not swayed by others emotions, opinions, thoughts, actions

UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Disrespected Put upon Inconvenienced Rejected
Victimised Used Invaded Drained Unsafe
Taken advantage of Distrustful Give more than you get
Overshare Resentful Clingy Withdrawn Lonely
"They made me feel ..." *"I can't say no"*
Acting intrusively Engaging in physical touch you'd rather not

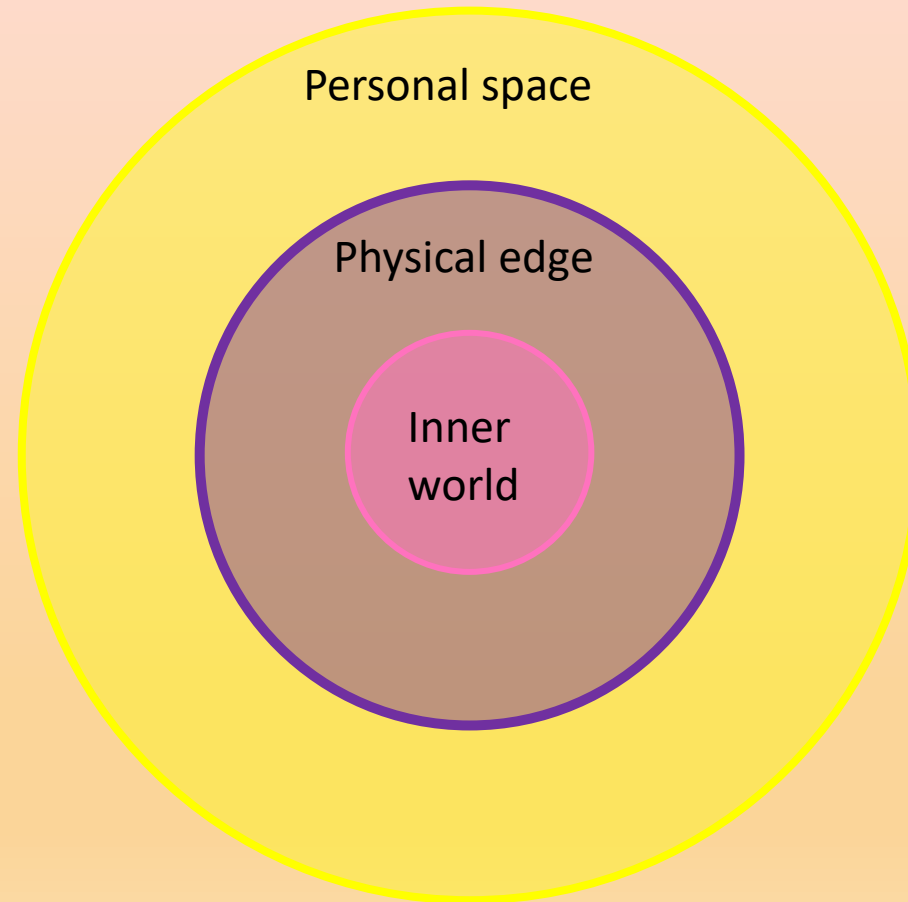
WHAT DO BOUNDARIES LOOK LIKE?

External:

physical bodies, personal
/energetic space

Internal:

thoughts, opinions, beliefs,
emotions



WHAT DO BOUNDARIES LOOK LIKE?

Verbal:

spoken or uttered – harder than you think

Nonverbal:

body-based, somatic experiences, posture, movements,
gestures, facial expression , “felt sense”





NON-VERBAL BOUNDARIES

Healthy boundaries are first felt internally! & communicated primarily non-verbally

- Body language that says “yes or “no”
- Pattern can override if not conscious *“I did it again!” “I wish I’d said / done”*

Become AWARE of your PARTICULAR body habit in relationships and in setting and responding to limits

NON-VERBAL BOUNDARIES

- Body signals that suggest a boundary needs to be re-set or revised
- Learn to attune to what your body is saying (+ observe nonverbal signs in others)
 - Tightening, Constricting, Softening
 - Pulling back, Withdrawing, Being still
 - Leaning forward, reaching out
 - Taking a deep breath, Gasping, Stop breathing, Sighing
 - Scowl, grimace, clenched jaw, squinty eyes, widen eyes, pursed lips, nodding, smiling, shaking your head, avert gaze, make eye contact
 - Turning away, Stepping back, Square shoulders, Stop signal with hands



WHAT'S YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE?

Know and understand your “style of relating”

BOUNDARY WORK =

- Adjust and revise your RESPONSE based on **what's best in the present moment circumstance** vs REACTING based on your conditioning

“I’m the sort of person that _____”, “I’ve always done it like _____”

Conditioning = Path of least resistance / Default / Unconscious

vs

Choosing = Taking RESPONSIBILITY in the present moment , Conscious

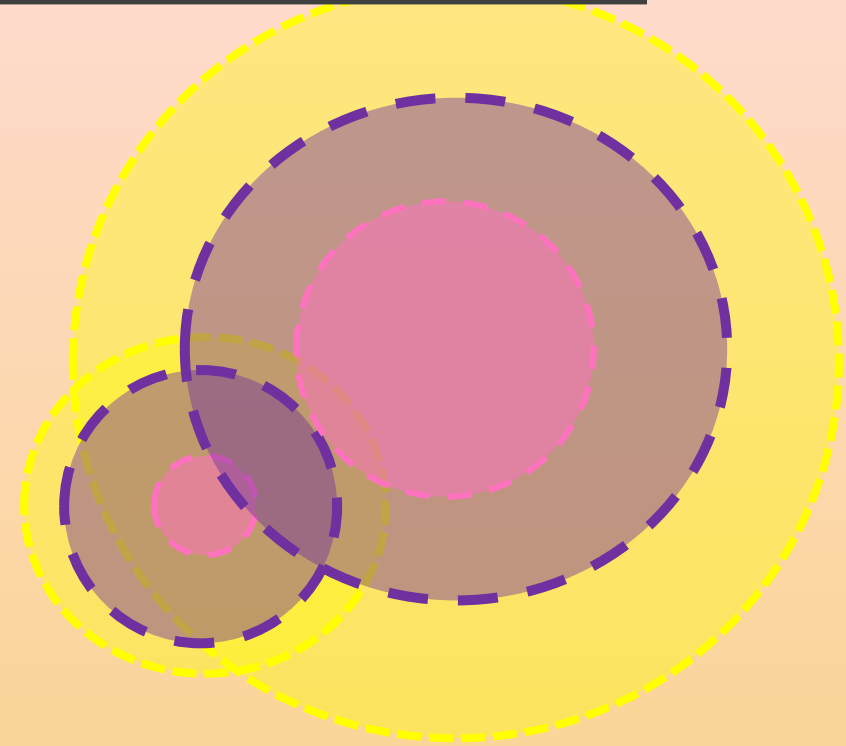
NO BLAME! Look out for “my fault” / “their fault” thinking



WHAT'S YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE?

Under-boundaried?

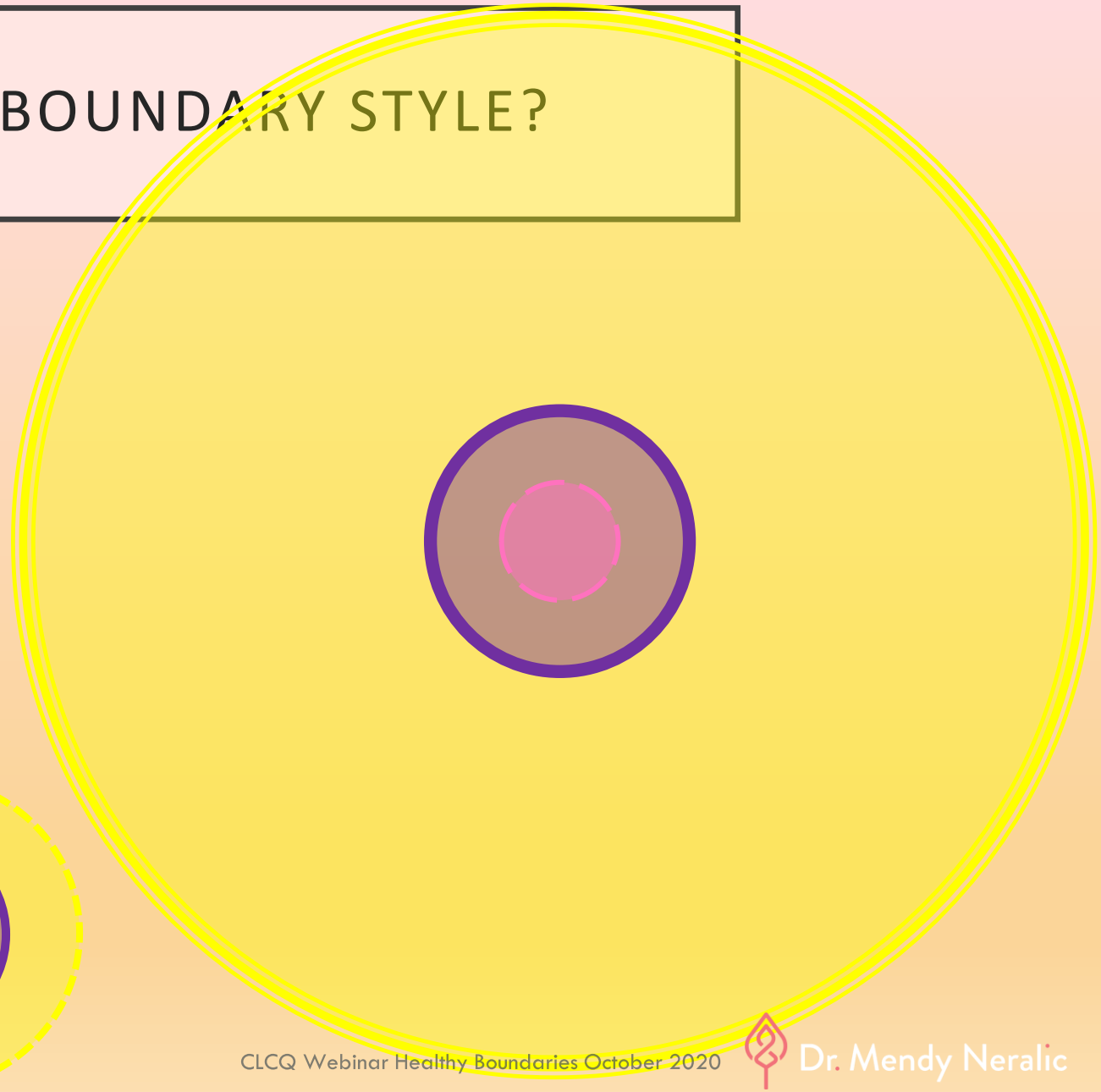
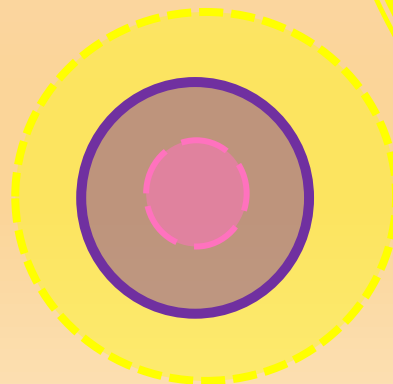
- “approach”
 - Giving / sharing too much
 - Too open, Collapsed
 - Can't defend or protect, Compliance
 - Default to say “yes” / people please
 - Problems saying “no” / setting limits
-
- Feel victimized / let down
 - Turn to others for advice/direction
 - Easily swayed by others opinions
 - Don't know what they want/desire
 - Don't see others as having boundaries
 - Enmeshment/Codependency



WHAT'S YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE?

Over-boundaried?

- “avoid”
 - Withhold connection / information
 - Withdraw from contact
 - Too rigid / Inflexible / Defensive
 - Default to say “no”
-
- Don't ask for help
 - Don't tend to trust
 - Hypersensitive to intrusions and physical proximity
 - Aggressively set limits
 - Self reliant and Self sufficient



WHAT'S YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE?

Pendulum?

- Alternate between under- and over-boundaried
- ...give in, open up (too open) , then disappointment, put up walls, avoid, push away
- Swing between feeling lonely and feeling vulnerable

Leaky?

- Healthy boundaries most of the time
- Holes or gaps in some situations or with some relationships, or when in a temporarily vulnerable state (eg, sick, stressed, tired)



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

HYPER-AROUSAL

High Energy

Healthy boundaries:

Relaxed, Empathetic,
Flexible,
Not threatened by
disagreement
Separate + Connected

Trigger:
Boundary is
being crossed

Anxiety, Panic, Rage,
Fear based reactivity
Over-boundaried
Fight, flight, freeze

REACTIVE - UNCONSCIOUS

RESPONSIVE - CONSCIOUS

HYPO-AROUSAL

Low Energy

Give in, Compliance, Passive
Under-boundaried
Collapse
Lethargy, Burnout,

NON-RESPONSIVE - UNCONSCIOUS





WHAT'S YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE?

Practice:

What do you experience in your body in each of these situations?

Where

- 1) You tend to be under- boundaried? (eg. fail to say “no” do things you’d rather not, overshare)**
- 2) You tend to be over - boundaried? (eg. default to “no”, feel unnecessarily distrustful, guarded, emotionally distant)**
- 3) You tend to swing between (ie quick to say yes, feel overwhelmed then shut down)**
- 4) You have healthy boundaries (ie state your preferences, stand up for yourself without overwhelm or guilt)**



WORK WITH YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE

Under-boundaried

- Strengthening your “no” + Conscious and responsive “yes”
- Become more connected to yourself
- You’re allowed to be “Selfish”
- RESOURCES:
 - Ground and Align, Contain
 - Address collapse and being easily thrown off
 - Activating and Empowering words, actions and gestures

Eg. shake head, purse lips, look away, narrow eyes, cross arms, push away, stop sign, tighten body, square shoulders



WORK WITH YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE

Over-boundaried

- Fear of becoming taken advantage of and vulnerable
- Practice choosing “yes” – safely + Conscious and responsive “no”
- Proximity doesn’t always = danger
- RESOURCES
 - Soften and Open, Contain
 - Tense then release exercises
 - Turning toward words, gestures and actions

Eg smile, nod, make eye contact, lean in, reach out, touch, soften muscles, soften facial expression, open palms, breathe out

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

HYPER-AROUSAL High Energy

Healthy boundaries:

Relaxed, Empathetic,
Flexible,
Not threatened by
disagreement
Separate + Connected

HYPO-AROUSAL Low Energy

REACTIVE - UNCONSCIOUS

Anxiety, Panic, Rage,
Fear based reactivity
Over-boundaried
Fight, flight, freeze

I'm going to set a limit
"no"
Engage **RESOURCES**
to keep mind "online"

RESPONSIVE - CONSCIOUS

Trigger:
Boundary is
being crossed

I'm going to soften and open
"yes"
without losing integrity
Engage **RESOURCES**
to keep mind "online"

Give in, Compliance,
Under-boundaried Collapse
Lethargy, Burnout,

NON-RESPONSIVE - UNCONSCIOUS



VERBAL BOUNDARIES & CONFLICT

Congruency between nonverbal and verbal boundaries

- Practice matching your words to your actions
- Clear and unambiguous message vs *“maybe” “I’m not sure”*

Move through a hot issue holding care and respect for yourself and the other person

- Watch for righteousness, inflated self-importance/ego, blame, resentment
- Where are you in your Window of Tolerance? - do you need to resource yourself first?
- Choose moderation – the middle path – consciously choosing your response - can still be empowered



VERBAL BOUNDARIES & CONFLICT

How to set verbal limits

**“ _____ *[this specific behaviour]* _____ is not ok with me. I'd like it if you would _____
[specific action] _____.**

“I'd prefer to do _____.” “I like / don't like _____.”



VERBAL BOUNDARIES & CONFLICT

“Giving me a task right before I go home is not ok with me anymore. I’d like it if you would give me these tasks much earlier in the day so I have time to finish it.”

“Dropping over unannounced is not ok with me. I’d like it if you would text and check in if it’s ok with me first.”

“I’d prefer the meeting to start at 10am” / “10am works best for me”

“That make me feel uncomfortable.” “Absolutely not” “No ! “ “Yes that’s good”

VERBAL BOUNDARIES & CONFLICT

“Fighting fair” - How to stay IN and stay STEADY in a difficult conversation

- Watch for signs of overwhelm in yourself and others – AWARENESS
- Use your RESOURCES to stay in or just outside of your Window of Tolerance
- Give yourself (and others) time and space to choose with consciousness
- Stay CONNECTED with another without losing yourself
 - Express your limits – what are the deal breakers?
 - Express your needs (without attachment)
 - Enhance connection, trust, courage

VERBAL BOUNDARIES & CONFLICT

- *“You’re right about that part” “Fair enough”*
- *“Ok give me a moment to think about that”*
- *“I can see your point even though I share a different view”*
- *“Name calling is a deal-breaker” “I don’t answer messages after 6pm”*
- *“I’m finding this conversation a little intense right now. I’d like to come back to this in an hour once I’ve settled.” – BIDDING TIME – PAUSING is excellent selfcare*
- *I know I said I’d do _____, but I was reacting before I had time to think. What I can do instead is _____ “ – REDO / REPAIR*
- *“I over-reacted and felt threatened when you asked for my help. I can’t help now but can tomorrow morning. Thanks for understanding” REDO/REPAIR*



WORK WITH YOUR BOUNDARY STYLE

Practice:

Bring to mind a one of the situations you contacted earlier where you were either under/over boundaried? or pendulum?

- Notice how you feel in your body; what is the sensation, where?
- How are you standing, posture, proximity, breathing like? Are you gesturing or moving, or have the impulse to move in any way?
- What is your emotional experience?
- Thoughts?
- Step back, observe, be curious ...
- How do you want to convey your revised boundary with your body? Facial expression, posture change, gesture with your arms, hand, gaze, a movement?
- Are there particular words that come up for you spontaneously?



Right response carries insight and right amounts of compassion and strength mixed together. Injured instincts must be arighted by practicing and enforcing strong boundaries and by practicing firm and, when possible, generous responses, but solid ones nevertheless.

Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estes

FINAL WORDS

- Practice and commit to increasing awareness of somatic signals of boundary violations
- Understand your boundary / relating style – What's your conditioning?
- Just begin: Measured risk – gradually push the edges of your comfort – stretch your WOT
 - Little and often
 - Give yourself time to absorb the information and implement new ways of relating and limit setting
 - Build confidence with setting limits and expressing your preferences in the mundane and everyday

FINAL WORDS

- Under-boundaried: work toward containment, strengthening and saying “no”
- Over-boundaried: work toward softening, expanding and moving in, saying “yes”
- Be willing to make mistakes – REDO and REPAIR are your friends!
- Avoid saying “sorry” but take responsibility
- Avoid demeaning, diminishing, destroying

It only takes one person's shift to create a new ripple

Pixie Lighthouse

