

Learn to set your personal boundaries

by Kim Illig

As an intuitive counselor, I help men and women gain a deeper understanding of their emotions, dreams, and goals. Together my clients and I create opportunities for self-discovery that allow them to open doors to create the lives they want.

One obstacle to living authentically that I see very often is people having soft personal boundaries. Boundaries are limits we consciously or unconsciously put in place to take good care of ourselves. "Soft-boundaries" refers to people feeling that they do not have a choice.

When we feel we are without choice we find ourselves doing things we don't want to or things we think we should or must do. Soft-boundaries occur when we act one way, but feel a completely different way and do it because we feel we have to. This can be as simple as saying you will call someone when you don't want to, or hosting a big event because you feel it is the right thing to do.

Managing personal boundaries is not a task for the weak-hearted, but the rewards of doing it are exponential. I am exploring how well I manage my own boundaries with my aging mother who is moving from an independent lifestyle to assisted living. At this time in her life, my mother lives far away but wants my participation in her daily decisions. Our conversations bring up a strong feeling that I should drop everything to go help her. However, if I become the dutiful daughter and leave my home, my husband, my dogs, and my intuitive

counseling practice to take care of her and her life, I, in turn, let go of taking care of my own life. This is where the setting of boundaries is essential.

Although I have been practicing personal empowerment for years, I can still slip back into the attitude I was socialized with. If someone says, "Help me!" it is easy for me to jump in and say, "Here I am, I will help you in any way you need," especially when the person asking happens to be my mother. Yet, because I have been studying personal boundary management for 30 years, I understand that jumping in and taking care of my mother will cause more havoc than it will provide the nurturance my mother needs at this major transitional time in her life.

There is a part of me that would love to take care of my mother and let go of being conscious and responsible for my personal boundaries because it is hard to hear her fear and uncertainty about her changing life. Yet, I believe that by not dropping everything to go to her aid, I provide her with the opportunity to take care of herself while reminding both of us that she is still fully capable of making her own decisions. Along with that, I respect myself by remembering that my priority is my life and it is worthy of my nurturance. If my mother and I act consciously, we can have a conversation about both of our wants that will end up with a win/win situation.

Ideally, boundaries are limits that one sets intentionally which then allow for the healthy receiving of input from others. Boundaries

define the parts of our life experiences or our relationships that we are willing or are not willing to participate in. Notice that I am saying "ideally." Our everyday management of life includes many opportunities for our boundaries to be unconsciously set or to be set inappropriately. This can result in participating in situations and relationships that leave us feeling drained, resentful, and unsatisfied with the way we are living our lives.

Here are some tools I share with my clients in regards to creating

solid personal boundaries.

1. Notice your reactions and emotional responses. Reactions of anger, annoyance, or frustration are indications of a boundary breach. Often anger, annoyance, or frustration results from people allowing themselves to do something they have agreed with themselves not to do. For example: Have you ever experienced yourself saying, "I won't do that again," and then find yourself doing it again? That is a very common boundary breach, which may result in feelings of anger

towards others or feeling overwhelmed.

2. If you hear yourself say, "I have no choice," that is also an indication of a loose boundary. Remember, we always have choice. This can be a hard thing for some people to accept, but by setting good boundaries and cultivating compassion for yourself, you can effectively deal with whatever situation presents itself.

3. One of the most powerful tips I offer clients is the use of "I" statements. A boundary breach occurs

when we blame someone else for what our experience is. Assertions like, "You made me feel angry," or "He made me feel sad" are examples of how using blame results in soft boundaries. Instead, share thoughts or feelings from your perspective, "I feel angry when you say that," or "I feel sad when he did that." The "I" statement is a powerful tool for maintaining and declaring an authentic personal boundary, which in turn helps you remain present and conscious about your reactions.

Setting and maintaining authentic boundaries is not for the timid. This type of personal work requires intention, to live a life of integrity and to make yourself a priority. Through consciously setting boundaries, you will find that you live the life you choose, not one filled only with things you feel you must or should do. This process requires the courage to face your edge, but helps you live a healthier, happier life of integrity and meaning.

Kim Illig is a certified intuitive counselor who has been practicing healing arts for more than 30 years. Having studied with Drs. Caroline Myss and Norman Shealy, Kim brings a variety of skills to her practice and clients. She enjoys working with clients one-on-one and with larger groups. To learn more about Kim and her intuitive counseling services, visit www.kimillig.com or call (425) 864-2295.



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