

Creating and Setting Personal Boundaries

*A webinar provided through
Taddle Creek Family Health Team*

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Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that as Torontonians, we are living on, and indeed broadcasting from, land that is the traditional lands of the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Huron-Wendat peoples, and the Seneca Nation - Toronto being the traditional home of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and covered by the Williams Treaty of 1923.

We acknowledge that as active members of settler colonial Canadian society, we have a role to play in reckoning with the truth of the historical and ongoing violence of colonialism, and in making authentic reconciliation with Indigenous people of this land.



Introduction

- Webinar format
 - Conversational between presenters
 - Please gather pen and paper for some reflective writing later in the webinar
- We will not be answering any questions during the presentation
 - Please send questions to chat, a document with answers (as well as a video recording of the podcast and slides) will be added to the website
 - A recording of this webinar, and a list of handouts/resources can be found on TC FHT's website within 2 days of this presentation

Link: <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/programs/mental-health/>
- Evaluations
 - Given to everyone who attended in an email. Please fill these out honestly, feedback is very useful
- Disclaimer
 - Some of the subject matter discussed today may be triggering, maybe distressing. If you need to take a break please do so. Also feel free to utilize the crisis and other mental health resources listed on the website. If there is an emergency, please call 911 or visit your local emergency department
 - Gerstein Centre 24/7 Crisis Phone Line: 416-929-5200



Agenda

- What are boundaries?
- Types and categories of boundaries
- History of boundaries
- Signs we may need boundaries
- Considerations with setting boundaries
- Exercise
- Assertive communication
- Honouring boundaries of others
- How to set boundaries
- Communication tips

The background features abstract shapes in light green and light blue. A dark teal line starts from the top right, curves around the title, and then extends downwards, ending in a series of loops on the right side of the page.

Learning Objectives

1. Improved understanding of healthy relationships and types/categories of boundaries
2. Opportunity to reflect and consider the importance of boundaries in life
3. Increased familiarity with signs that setting or re-establishing boundaries will be helpful
4. Introduction to tools, methods, and styles for setting and honouring boundaries

Given the webinar format, we cannot ensure that these objectives are met, but here are some things we hope you may get from listening



Common ways to refer to boundaries:

What we say “yes” to, and what we say “no” to

“What’s okay and not okay” (Brené Brown, *Atlas of the Heart*)

Boundary definition:

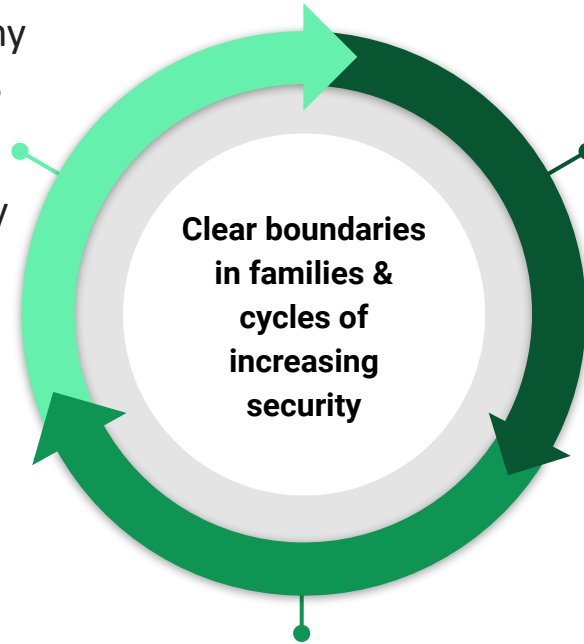
"Boundaries are guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify for themselves what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around them and how they will respond when someone steps outside those limits."
(outofthefog.net)

History of Boundaries as a concept in mental health

mid-1970s

- Salvador Minuchin founded *Structural Family Therapy*, now known as “the father of structural therapy”
 - Believed that families function best with well-defined boundaries

Hearing and being heard
can facilitate more empathy
between individuals, more
understanding and an
increased sense of security



Clear boundaries create an
environment in which people
feel oriented in their role, in
the family. Structure fosters
predictability and increased
sense of safety

With an increased sense of
safety, family members are
more likely to share their
thoughts and feelings

(Minuchin, 1982)

How to Define a Healthy Relationship

In a healthy relationship we can have:

Disagreements ***and*** compromise

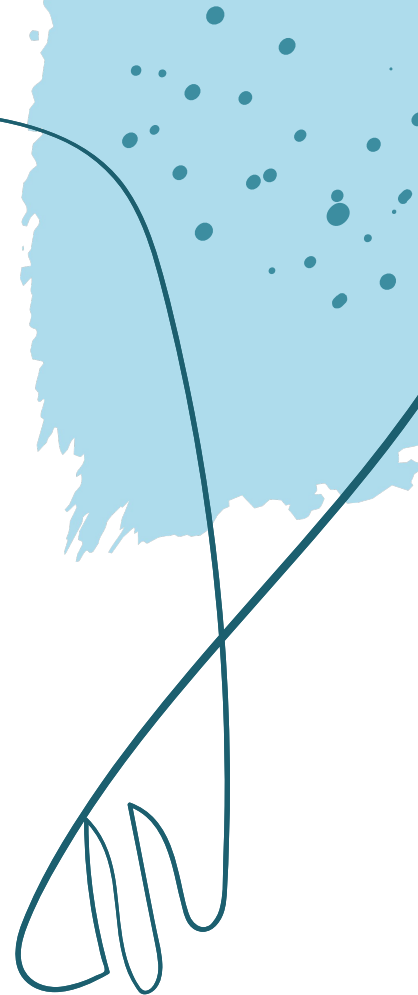
Hurt feelings ***and*** communication

Mistakes ***and*** accountability

Differences in opinions ***and*** discussion about them

Boundaries are like a House

- You do not have to let everyone into your house, you get to choose
- It is also very clear and visible so people can see where your house is
- The house protects you and your loved ones and valuables
- Personal boundaries involve determining what behaviours and interactions are acceptable for you - what you will and won't tolerate in your "house"





Types of Boundaries

- **Physical Boundaries:**
 - Provide a physical barrier b/w yourself others, includes your body, personal space, and privacy
 - Violations = standing too close, inappropriate touching, etc.
- **Emotional Boundaries:**
 - Protect you from being vulnerable to other people's words, thoughts, and actions
 - Violations = sacrificing your own needs, wants, or dreams to please others (aka "people pleasing"); taking responsibility for another person's feelings; taking responsibility for mistakes of others, (aka "personalizing") etc.
- **Intellectual Boundaries:**
 - Refer to thoughts and ideas
 - Violated when someone dismisses or appropriates another person's thoughts or ideas

Types of Boundaries

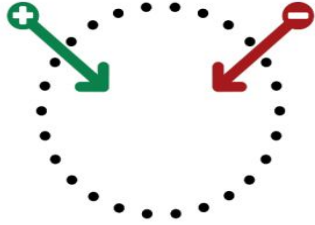
- **Sexual Boundaries:**
 - Refer to the emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of sexuality
 - Mutual understanding and respect of limitations and desires between sexual partners
 - Due to the intimacy and vulnerability of sexual relations, we risk violating boundaries when we engage without expressed consent.
 - We have to ask, with words. Even better: conversation, discuss, DIALOGUE.
- **Material Boundaries:**
 - Refer to money and possessions
 - What will you share and with whom?
- **Time Boundaries:**
 - Our relationship with time, and how we 'spend' it.
 - Can include dedicating time according to our values
 - What arises when you contemplate being late, or an early-bird?
 - Violated when another person demands too much of another person's time
- **Technology Boundaries:**
 - How we interact with the internet and digital media and devices
 - Consider privacy settings, time limits on screens, expectations with communication (eg. reply times), 'do not disturb' functions

It's personal, and relational

- We can have boundaries with our outer world (other people and beings, place and space) AND inner world (ourselves)
- Boundaries are about self-leadership, noticing what we need and responding
- When we think of boundaries as 'being responsive to our needs', we can bring in boundary talk in the way we engage with our physical and mental health, what ideas we focus on, our inner dialogue, our enjoyment in relationships, and how we make and spend our money and our time
 - *"I'm tired" and finding time to rest*
 - *"I need more money for the end of the month, I'll start saving now"*
 - *"How much am I going to think about this?"*
 - *"How important is it for me to speak up about this?"*
- Just like with external boundaries, it is natural for inner boundaries to change with time

3 Categories of Boundaries

Porous Boundaries



Lets almost anyone get close to them

Overly trusting of others, even strangers

Overshares personal information

Has difficulty saying "no" to others

Overly involved in others' problems

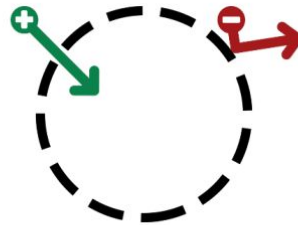
Quick to adopt others' opinions

Avoids conflict by giving in to others

Does not assert personal values

Communicates passively

Flexible Boundaries



Selective about whom to let in and keep out

Takes time to build trust with others

Shares personal information appropriately

Able to say "no" when needed

Supports others without being too involved

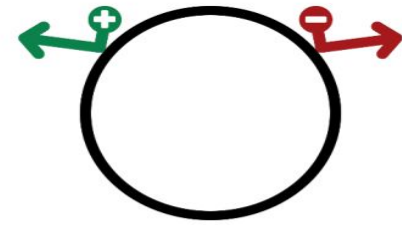
Values both own and others' opinions

Accepts conflict as a normal part of life

Stands by personal values, but can adapt

Communicates assertively

Rigid Boundaries



Keeps most people at a distance

Very untrusting of others

Very guarded with personal information

Says "no" to others most of the time

Detached from others' problems

Tends to ignore others' opinions

Avoids conflict by pushing others away

Has inflexible personal values

Communicates aggressively



Importance of Boundaries

- Healthy boundaries are important for maintaining healthy relationships - they allow us to keep our self-esteem while enjoying relationships
- Unhealthy boundaries (or lack of boundaries) can cause pain and lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and anger



What boundaries are NOT

- NOT meant to make you unhappy
 - Setting boundaries will help you attract people who respect and want good things for you
- NOT meant to limit your joy
 - You feel more enjoyment in activities because you truly want to do them and they match your values
- NOT set in stone
 - As we learn more about ourselves, we will change and so can our boundaries
- NOT boulders or walls
 - Meant to help us foster positive connections, not keep people out

Signs You May Benefit from Revisiting Boundaries

- Wanting to avoid, but feeling unable to take space
- Feeling imposed-upon
- Feeling isolated
- Identifying with any or some of the following statements:

It's hard for me to say no/I can't say no

I can't make my own decisions

I feel criticized

I take responsibility for other people's feelings

I take on other people's moods

I am often nervous, anxious, or resentful around certain people



Reflection

Let's take a moment to sit back and take a few deep breaths

What is coming up for you at this time? With all this information and discussion?

If it feels comfortable, please take note with pen and paper.



Boundary Influences

- Boundary setting can have a lot to do with how you witnessed and experienced boundaries being set, challenged, or dishonoured in early experiences



Things to Consider When Setting Boundaries

The following is a list of rights that we are all entitled to and deserve:

- I have the right to ask for what I want
- I have the right to say no
- I have the right to change my mind without making excuses
- I have the right to make mistakes and be responsible for them
- I have the right to expect honesty from others

Things to Consider When Setting Boundaries (Cont'd)

The following is a list of rights that we are all entitled to and deserve:

- I have the right to determine my own priorities
- I have the right to be angry with someone I love
- I have the right to be happy
- I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect
- I have the right to express my own feelings and opinions even if they are different from others

Things to Consider...

Intense emotions are cues that boundaries need to be set

We can also protect ourselves from those who are harmful

You may hurt someone's feelings when setting a boundary

Be prepared to follow through with your new boundary


You can set boundaries when you are ready, not a minute sooner

Set a limit clearly, in as few words as possible

There's a satisfying side to setting boundaries – it feels good!

When we have healthy boundaries, we can expect positive people and actions in our lives

Healthy boundaries let us choose who to trust, how far to trust them, and what actions to accept from them



● We can experience one emotion at any

- We can experience one emotion at any



Checking in with reference to sensations

We can increase our self-understanding by paying attention to our physical sensations, which are often related to our emotions.

Excerpt from: *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy: Interventions for Trauma and Attachment*
Pat Ogden & Janina Fisher
Forthcoming 2015. New York, NY: W.W. Norton

VOCABULARY FOR SENSATIONS

achy	clenched	energized	itchy	puffy	tense
airy	congested	faint	jerky	quaking	thick
bloated	constricted	flaccid	jumbly	quivery	tight
blocked	cool	flushed	knotted	radiating	tickley
breathless	cold	fluid	light	sharp	tingly
bubbly	damp	fluttery	moist	shivery	trembling
burning	dense	floaty	nauseous	shuddering	twitchy
buzzy	dizzy	fuzzy	numb	sore	vibrating
chills	dull	goose-bumps	paralyzed	stiff	warm
churning	electric	heavy	pins and needles	suffocating	weak
clammy	empty	hot	prickly	sweaty	wobbly

Ogden . Adapted from Ogden, P. (1997, 1998)



Emotional regulation

Which leads us to acknowledging the importance of being able to regulate our emotions.

... which in turn is rooted in a personal commitment to increase our capacity to tolerate our various emotions well enough to a) notice them, and b) sit with them long enough and calmly enough to be able to respond to them instead of being reactive.

We can parent our own selves, approach our emotions with curiosity and asking: What is this feeling telling me about my needs?

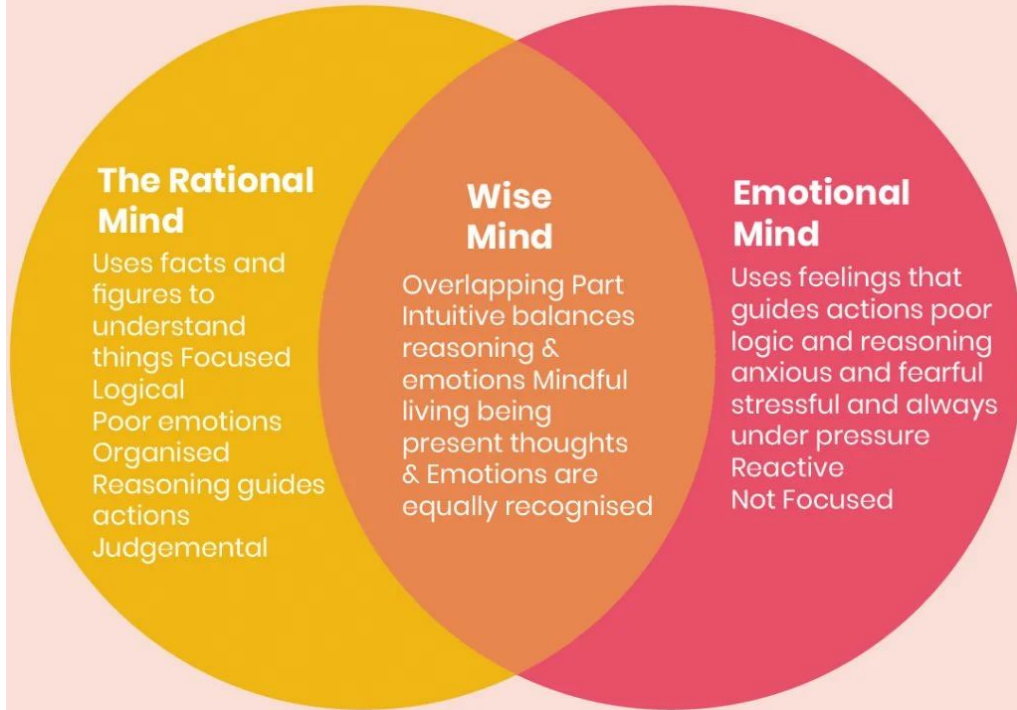
NOTICE

Peer-pressure, people-pleasing, FOMO, unhelpful guilt, shame, and feeling unsafe can be all be barriers to setting and honouring healthy boundaries

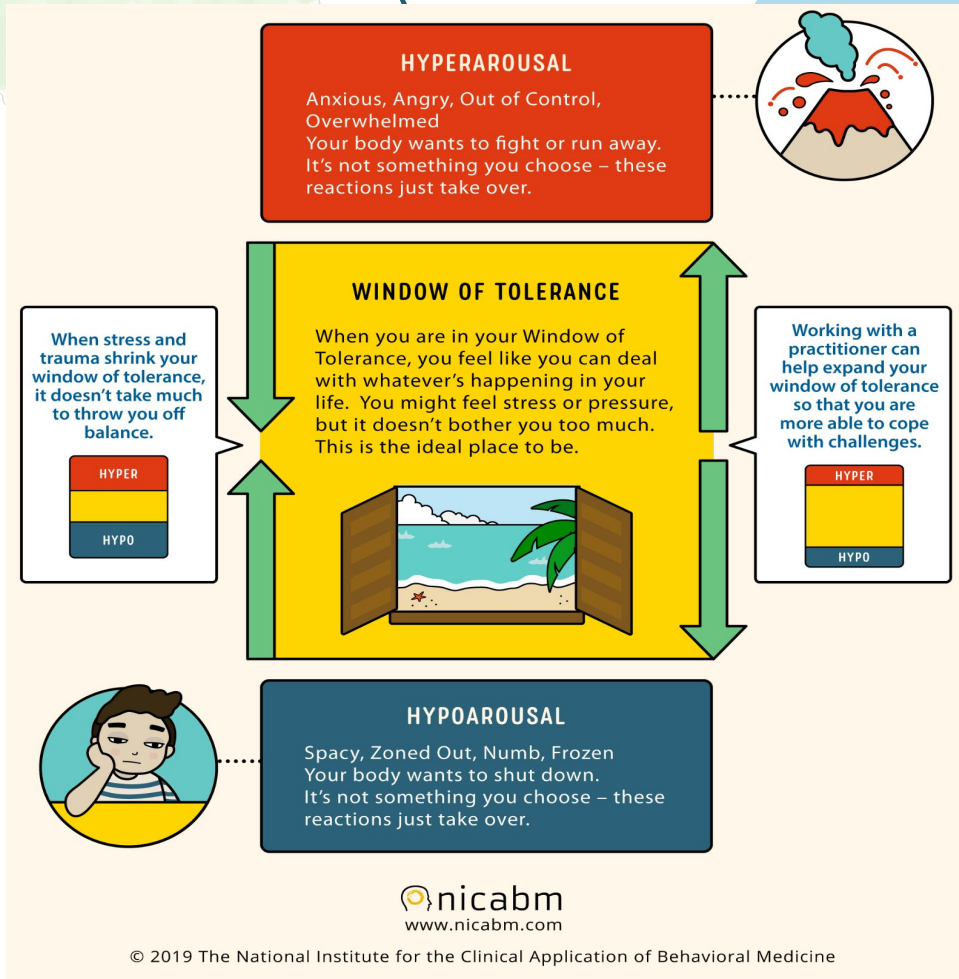


Muse Printables

Wise Mind



Wise Mind = Window of Tolerance





Locus of Control and Acceptance

- We cannot control how people act towards us, but we can refer to our expectations and boundaries to protect ourselves

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How to Set Boundaries

1. Determine the boundary that you would like to set (check in w/ yourself, what do you need?)
2. Remind yourself that your needs and boundaries are valid and important
3. Practice expressing your boundary using “I” statements and assertive communication skills
4. Express your boundary to the individual - be as clear, firm, respectful, and succinct as possible.



Green, Yellow, Red

- Melissa Urban- The Book of Boundaries

Green - Assume the person does not yet know the boundary, communicate it gently

Yellow - Figure the person has forgotten, remind them of the boundary and what you will do to honour it

Red - Identify that the person does not respect the boundary. Engage in activity that will help you honour the consequence

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Green, Yellow, Red - Example

- Melissa Urban- The Book of Boundaries

Green - Friend expecting you to have a glass of wine, but you are doing dry January. Express your boundary to them. "I am not going to drink alcohol, as I am doing dry January"

Yellow - Friend continues to offer a drink. Figure the person has forgotten, remind them of the boundary and what you will do to honour it. "I am doing dry Jan and not drinking. If you ask me again, I'm going home."

Red - The pressure continues. Identify that the person does not respect the boundary. Engage in activity that will help you honour the consequence: "I've told you that I don't want to drink and that I'd leave if you keep asking me to have a glass of wine, I'm going now."

Assertive Communication aka Non-Violent Communication

- Developed by Marshall Rosenberg (1999)
- David Servan-Schreiber (2003.): When communicating, we're coming from one of 3 stances: passive/passive-aggressive, aggressive, or assertive.
- S.P.A.C.E.E. (en français) acronym for structuring assertive communication:
- S: Source
- P: Place/Moment
- A: Approche amicale
- C: Comportement objectif (specifically describe the behaviour you'd like to see change (ie. "when ____ happens")
- E: Emotion (the impact the behaviour has on you emotionally (ie. "I feel ____") name anger if it's there, but also go for identifying the more vulnerable that are under the anger, that the anger is protecting or problem-solving for... the tenderness helps the relationality)
- E: Espoir (dashed hope, other consequences/ impacts of the behaviour; and preferred outcome)

Communicating Boundaries Assertively - DEAR MAN

Describe	Describe the situation <i>objectively</i> . This means sticking to the facts by avoiding opinion and interpretation. The goal is to get everyone on the same page.
Express	Let others know how a situation makes you feel by clearly expressing your feelings. Don't expect others to read your mind. Try using this line: " <i>I feel ___ because ___.</i> "
Assert	Don't beat around the bush—say what you need to say. <i>Don't say:</i> "Oh, well, I don't know if I can cook tonight or not." <i>Do say:</i> "I won't be able to cook because I'm working late."
Reinforce	Reward people who respond well, and reinforce why your desired outcome is positive. This can be as simple as a smile and a " <i>thank you</i> ".
Mindful	Don't forget the objective of the interaction. It can be easy to get sidetracked into harmful arguments and lose focus.
Appear	Appear confident. Consider your posture, tone, eye contact, and body language.
Negotiate	No one can have everything they want out of an interaction all the time. Be open to negotiation. <i>Do say:</i> "If you wash the dishes, I'll put them away."

Self-Respect

Sometimes in relationships you might find yourself betraying your own values and beliefs to receive approval or to get what you want. The acronym F.A.S.T. will help you achieve *self-respect effectiveness*.

Fair	Be fair. Not only to others, but also to yourself.
Apologies	Don't apologize unless it's warranted. Don't apologize for making a request, having an opinion, or disagreeing.
Stick to Values	Don't compromise your values just to be liked or to get what you want. Stand up for what you believe in.
Truthful	Avoid dishonesty such as exaggeration, acting helpless as a form of manipulation, or outright lying.



How can we honour others' boundaries?

- Is it hard for you to hear “no” from other people?
 - Why might this be?



Boundary Exercise

1. Who do you have trouble setting boundaries with?
2. Who are you able to set boundaries with?
3. What is one small thing you can change about how you are setting boundaries?

Brene Brown Clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL0oa8UGqxA>



Thank you for being here!

Please have your eye open for the evaluation/feedback form, which will be emailed to you after this webinar.

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References & Resources

Definition of boundaries: outofthefog.net

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<https://marlenaeva.medium.com/the-top-5-must-read-book-on-how-to-set-boundaries-11fee3b3a027>