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BOUNDARIES ACTIVITIES WORKBOOK

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SIGNS OF IGNORED BOUNDARIES

You can tell boundaries are being ignored if you are experiencing one or more of the following challenges:

Over Enmeshment: This requires everyone to follow the rule that everyone must do everything together and that everyone is to think, feel and act in the same way. No one is allowed to deviate from the family or group norms. Uniqueness, autonomy and idiosyncratic or unusual behaviors are viewed as deviations from the norm.

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Disassociation: This is blanking out during a stressful emotional event. You feel your physical and/or emotional space being violated and you tell yourself something like: "It doesn't matter." "Ignore it and it will go away." This "blinking out" results in being out of touch with your feelings about what happened. It also may result in your inability to remember what happened.

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Excessive Detachment: This occurs when neither you nor anyone else in the group, family or relationship is able to establish any fusion of emotions or affiliation of feelings. Everyone is totally independent from everyone else and there does not seem to be anything to hold you and them together in healthy union.

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Victimhood or Martyrdom:

With this, you identify yourself as a violated victim and become overly defensive to ward off further violation. Or it can be that once you accept your victimization, you continue to be knowingly victimized and then let others know of your martyrdom.

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Chip on the Shoulder: This is reflected in your interactions with others. Because of your anger over past violation of your emotional and/or physical space, and the real or perceived ignoring of your rights by others, you have a "chip on your shoulder" that declares "I dare you to come too close!"

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Invisibility: This involves you pulling in or over-controlling so that others, even yourself, never know how you are really feeling or what you are really thinking. Your goal is not to be seen or heard so that your boundaries are not violated.

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Aloofness or Shyness: This is a result of your insecurity from real or perceived experiences of being ignored or rejected in the past. This feels like a violation of your efforts to expand or stretch your boundaries to include others in your space. Once rejected, you take the defensive posture to reject others before they reject you. This keeps you inward and unwilling or fearful of opening up your space to others.

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Cold and Distant: This builds walls or barriers to insure that others do not permeate or invade your emotional or physical space. This too can be a defense, due to previous hurt and pain, from being violated, hurt, ignored or rejected. This stance is your declaration that "I've drawn the line over which I dare you to cross." It is a way to keep others out and put them off.

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Smothering: This results when another is overly solicitous of your needs and interests. This unwanted interest is overly intrusive into your emotional and physical space. It can be so overwhelming that you feel like you are being strangled, held too tightly and lack freedom to breathe on your own. You feel violated, used and overwhelmed.

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Lack of Privacy: This is present when it seems to you that nothing you think, feel, or do is your own business. You are expected to report to others in your family or group all details and content of your feelings, reactions, opinions, relationships and dealings with the outside world. You begin to feel that nothing you experience can be kept in the privacy of your own domain. You begin to believe you do not have a private domain or your own space into which you can escape.

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HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Creating and maintaining healthy boundaries is one way we can improve our lives.

In this section, I provide you with examples of how you can stand up for yourself, set healthy boundaries, and free yourself from the “disease to please” with the following 3 Steps.

Step 1: Self Awareness

Step 2: It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It

Step 3: Strengthen Your Internal Boundaries

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HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Step 1: Self Awareness

The first step to set boundaries is self-awareness. Pay attention to the situations when you are low on energy, feel butterflies in your stomach, or want to cry.

Identifying where you need more space, self-respect, energy or personal power is the first step.

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ACTIVITY

Complete the following sentence with at least 10 examples. Feel free to use another page if you need more space.

People may not _____.

Examples: "Humiliate me in front of others; Criticize me; go through my personal things."

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

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ACTIVITY

Complete the following sentence with at least 10 examples. Feel free to use another page if you need more space.

I have the right to ask for _____.
Examples: "Privacy; More information about medication before taking it; Support."

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

ACTIVITY

Complete the following sentence with at least 10 examples. Feel free to use another page if you need more space.

To protect my energy, my time, and my sanity, it is ok to _____.

Examples: "Change my mind; Turn the ringer off on my phone; Say No."

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

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HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Step 2: It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It

Start setting simple but firm boundaries with a graceful or neutral tone. This will feel uncomfortable at first, but as you take care of yourself, the personal power you gain will make it easier.

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HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

1. Be sure to have support in place before and after each conversation.

If you cannot find support from a friend or family member, you may be able to find a friend online (Spirit Warriors) or call a local distress center.

2. Vent any strong emotions with your partner or other supports before having your boundary conversation.

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HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

3. Use simple and direct language.

Examples:

To set a boundary with an angry person: "You may not yell at me. If you continue, I'll have to leave the room."

To set a boundary with personal phone calls at work: "I've decided to take all personal calls in the evening in order to get my work done. I will need to call you later."

To say no to extra commitments: "Although this organization is important to me, I need to decline your request for volunteer help in order to honor my family's needs."

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To set a boundary with someone who is critical: "It's not okay with me that you comment on my weight. I'd like to ask you to stop."

To buy yourself time when making tough decisions: "I'll have to sleep on it; I have a policy of not making decisions right away."

To back out of a commitment: "I know I agreed to head up our fundraising efforts, but after reviewing my schedule, I now realize that I won't be able to give it my best attention. I'd like to help find a replacement by the end of next week."

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To set a boundary with an adult child who borrows money: "I won't be lending you money anymore. I love you and you need to take responsibility for yourself."

4. When setting boundaries, there is no need to defend, debate, or over-explain your feelings. Be firm, gracious and direct. When faced with resistance, repeat your statement or request.

HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

5. Back up your boundary with action. Stay strong. If you give in, you invite people to ignore your needs

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Step 3: Strengthen Your Internal Boundaries

One of the reasons that people take things personally is because they have weak "internal boundaries." An internal boundary is like an invisible shield that prevents you from taking in a comment without checking it out first.

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For example, when someone accuses you of being arrogant, stop and consider the statement before taking it in. When you use this internal shield, especially with difficult people like an ex-spouse, critical parent or someone who is actively using drugs and/or alcohol or in the early stages of recovery, it gives you time to ask yourself the following three questions:

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HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

How much of this is true about me?

How much of this is about the other person?

What do I need to do (if anything) to regain my personal power or stand up for myself?

This last question is very important.

Too often people neglect to stand up for themselves by avoiding confrontation and end up weakening their internal shield, making it harder to set boundaries at all.

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HOW TO BEGIN TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

So, if someone offends you, it may be necessary to let them know in order to **protect and strengthen your internal boundaries.**

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Back Ups to Help You Stick to Your Boundaries

1. Promises to Yourself

Example “When I reach a certain point of exhaustion or stress, I will stop, identify the problem and/or get the rest and help I need.”
“When I am rejected, I will feel the discomfort, sort through my part, if any, accept current circumstances, learn and move on.”

Promises to Yourself:

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2. Reach Out for Warrior Support

On-Call Help Confidante - Someone who will let you vent and keep it confidential.

Mentor - Someone you admire and trust to encourage, teach and guide you.

Helping Team - Friends and family who will be there for you and help you when you need.

My Warrior Support Team:

On-Call Help Confidante:

Mentor:

Helping Team:

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3. Personal Power Sources:

Physical: Sleep, exercise, nutrition, etc.

Spiritual: Meditation, affirmations, prayer.

Emotional: Getting feelings out in a way that is safe for you and others.

Mental: thinking about something else for a while, giving your mind a break.

My Personal Power Sources:

Physical: _____

Spiritual: _____

Emotional: _____

Mental: _____

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Set healthy boundaries! This is a muscle that takes practice and time to build.

When you can integrate these practices, you will ultimately become strong in who you are. You can set boundaries, you can say no, you can express your anger **appropriately**, you stop trying to save and fix other people.

You learn the healthy skill of putting yourself first. You must put the oxygen mask on yourself FIRST in order to be effective in helping anyone else.

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