

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Directorate:
Counselling and
Career
Development
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Define tomorrow.

UNISA



INTRODUCTION

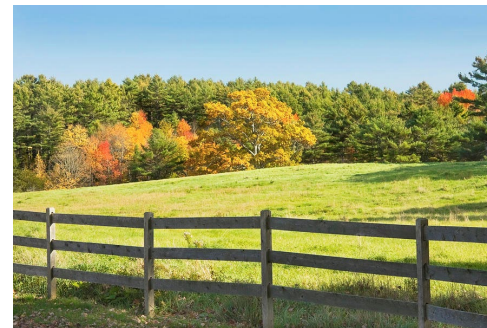
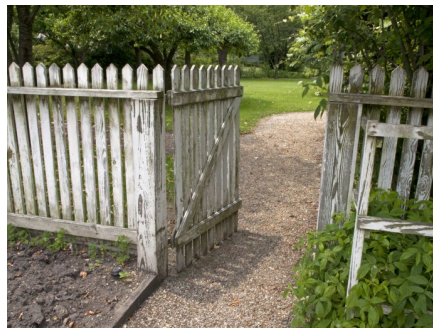
- Setting boundaries is an important part of establishing one's identity and is a crucial aspect of mental health and well-being.
- Learning to set healthy personal boundaries is necessary for maintaining a positive self-concept, or self-image.
- Boundaries can be physical or psychological/emotional.
- Personal boundaries are the physical, emotional and mental limits we establish to protect ourselves from being manipulated, used, or violated by others. They allow us to separate who we are, and what we think and feel, from the thoughts and feelings of others. Their presence helps us express ourselves as the unique individuals we are, while we acknowledge the same in others.
- It would not be possible to enjoy healthy relationships without the existence of personal boundaries, or without our willingness to communicate them directly and honestly with others. We must recognize that each of us is a unique individual with distinct emotions, needs and preferences.

OUTCOMES

- Be able to understand what personal boundaries are
- Be able to understand the concept of boundaries to
 - regulate interaction with self and others
 - regulate own emotions
- Be able to understand common traits of different types of boundaries
- Be able to understand why healthy boundaries are important
- Be able to identify what healthy boundaries are and how to set them

NOW LET'S DEFINE BOUNDARIES

Think of various examples of boundaries



NOW LET'S DEFINE BOUNDARIES

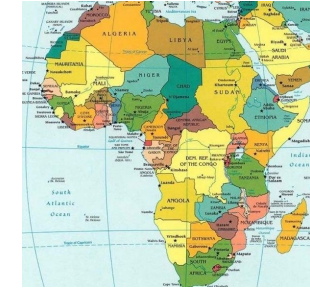
- Think of various examples of boundaries.
- List two boundaries that you had to consider since you got up this morning?
- What are the categories of boundaries that are emerging?
- Think of a time you chose to set a boundary. What were the challenges you faced when you set the boundary?



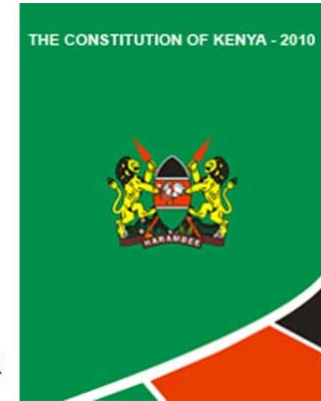
bwc12430539 Barewalls ©

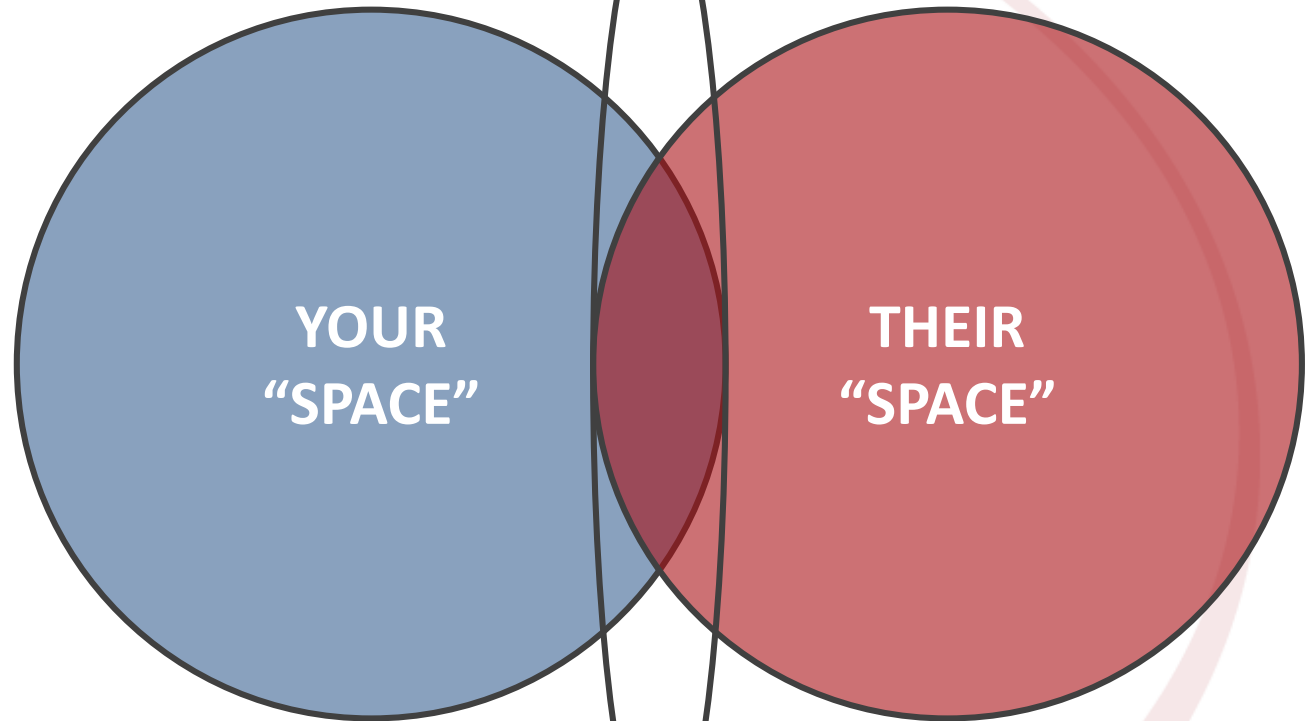


NO.
IS A COMPLETE SENTENCE.
ANNE LAMOTT



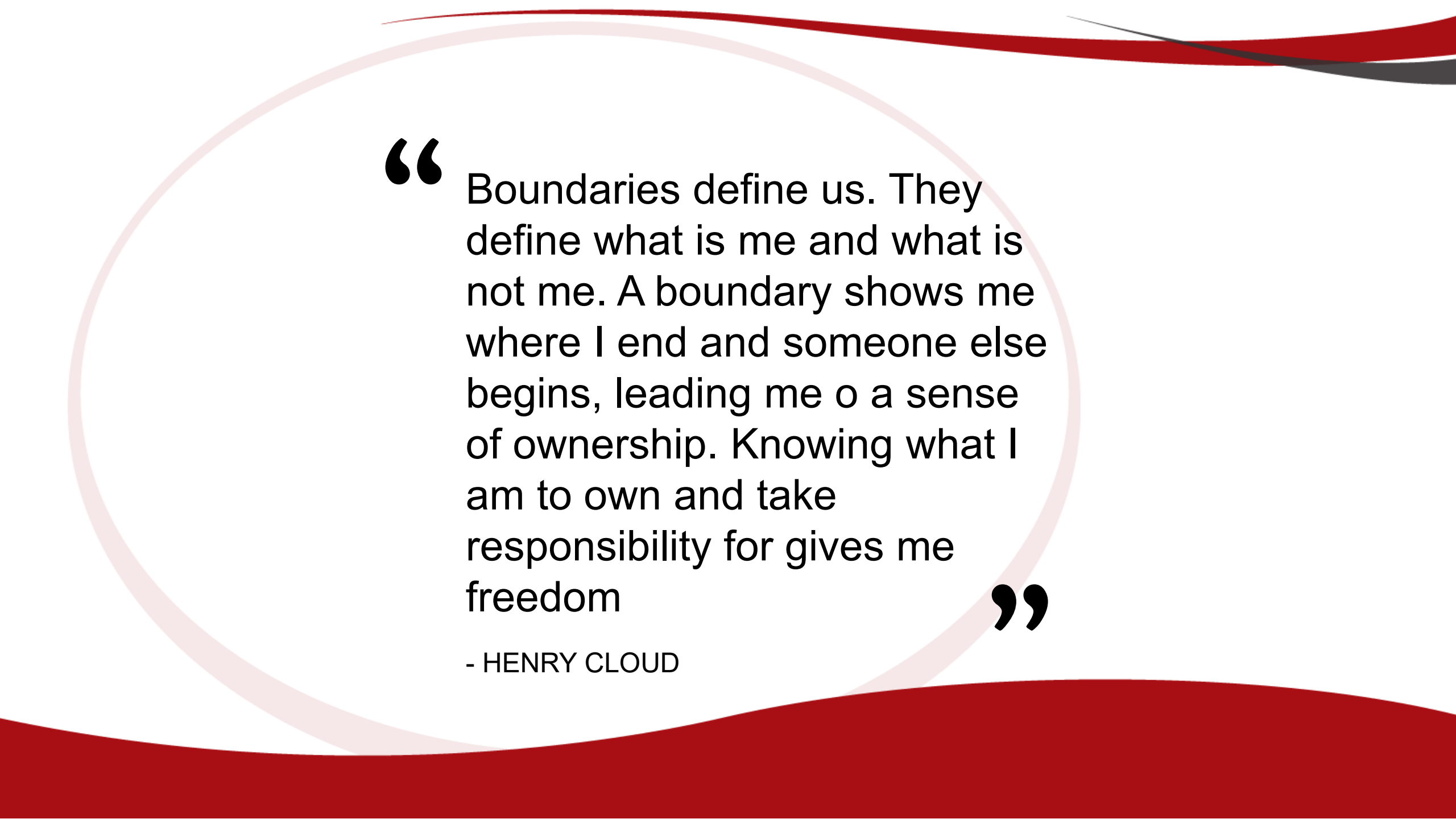
**CONSTITUTION
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REPUBLIC OF KENYA**





Boundary





“ Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom ”

- HENRY CLOUD

WHAT ARE PERSONAL BOUNDARIES?

- Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships.
- A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.
- A person who always keeps others at a distance (whether emotionally, physically, or otherwise) is said to have rigid boundaries.
- Alternatively, someone who tends to get too involved with others has porous boundaries.

Types of personal boundaries

Physical boundaries

- Refer to personal space and physical touch. Healthy physical boundaries include an awareness of what's appropriate, and what's not, in various settings and types of relationships (hug, shake hands, or kiss?). Physical boundaries may be violated if someone touches you when you don't want them to, or when they invade your personal space (for example, rummaging through your bedroom).

Intellectual boundaries

- Refers to thoughts and ideas. Healthy intellectual boundaries include respect for others' ideas, and an awareness of appropriate discussion (should we talk about the weather, or politics?). Intellectual boundaries are violated when someone dismisses or belittles another person's thoughts or ideas.

Emotional boundaries

- Refers to a person's feelings. Healthy emotional boundaries include limitations on when to share, and when not to share, personal information. For example, gradually sharing personal information during the development of a relationship, as opposed to revealing everything to everyone. Emotional boundaries are violated when someone criticizes, or invalidates another person's feelings.



Types of personal boundaries

Sexual boundaries

- Refer to the emotional, intellectual and physical aspects of sexuality. Healthy sexual boundaries involve mutual understanding and respect of limitations and desires between sexual partners.

Material boundaries

- Refer to money and possessions. Healthy material boundaries involve setting limits on what you will share, and with whom. For example, it may be appropriate to lend a car to a family member, but probably not to someone you met this morning. Material boundaries are violated when someone steals or damages another person's possessions, or when they pressure them to give or lend them their possessions.

Time boundaries

- Refer to how a person uses their time. To have healthy time boundaries, a person must set aside enough time for each facet of their life such as work, relationships, and hobbies. Time boundaries are violated when another person demands too much of another's time.



Family interactions: Boundaries

- Family boundaries are the physical and emotional barriers that distinguish individuals and families and regulate the amount of contact occurring among family members.
 - Favourite chair – physical barrier
 - Room designations – physical barrier
 - Closeness/distance/openness – emotional barrier
- Types of boundaries:
 - Rigid boundaries restrict adaptation and change
 - Clear boundaries are physical, mental or emotional barriers that allow for adaptation and change
 - Diffuse boundaries allow for too much change and adaptation

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- **Values own opinions.** Doesn't compromise values for others. Shares personal information in an appropriate way (does not over or under share). Knows personal wants and needs, and can communicate them. Accepting when others say "no" to them
- **Most people have a mix of different boundary types.** For example, someone could have healthy boundaries at work, porous boundaries in romantic relationships, and a mix of all three types with their family. One size does not fit all!
- **The appropriateness of boundaries depends on setting.** What's appropriate to say when you're out with friends might not be appropriate when you're at work.
- **Some cultures have very different expectations when it comes to boundaries.** For example, in some cultures it's considered wildly inappropriate to express emotions publicly. In other cultures, emotional expression is encouraged.

ADVANTAGES OF HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- Good emotional/mental health
- Influence behaviours of others
- Developing identity
- Developing autonomy
- Self-care
- We have improved self-confidence & a healthy self-concept
- Are better able to communicate with others
- Have better more fulfilling relationships
- Have more stability and control over our lives

SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- Going against personal values or rights in order to please others
- Giving as much as you can for the sake of giving
- Taking as much as you can for the sake of taking
- Letting others define you
- Expecting others to fill your needs automatically
- Feeling bad or guilty when you say no
- Not speaking up when you are treated poorly
- Falling apart so someone can take care of you
- Falling "in love" with someone you barely know or who reaches out to you
- Accepting advances, touching and sex that you don't want
- Touching a person without asking



List an important
boundary that you
would like to set in
place

BOUNDARY EXPLORATION

- Think about a person, or a group of people, with whom you struggle to set healthy boundaries. This could mean that your boundaries are too rigid (you keep this person at a distance), too porous (you open up too much), or there's some other problem that isn't so easily labelled.
- Who do you struggle to set healthy boundaries with? (e.g. "my husband" or "co-workers")
- In your relationship with the person you listed above, how are your boundaries in each of the following categories?
 - Physical Boundaries
 - Intellectual Boundaries
 - Emotional Boundaries
 - Sexual Boundaries
 - Material Boundaries
 - Time Boundaries
- Take a moment to imagine what it will be like when you begin to establish healthy boundaries with this person. If your boundaries are too rigid, that might mean opening up. If they're porous, it might mean setting limits and saying "no" when you don't want to do something.
- What are some specific actions you can take to improve your boundaries?
- How do you think the other person will respond to these changes?
- How do you think your life will be different once you've established healthy boundaries?
- How easy is it for you to set healthy boundaries? Do you have any tips for setting and respecting healthy boundaries?

HOW DO WE ESTABLISH HEALTHY PERSONAL BOUNDARIES?

- **Know that you have a right to personal boundaries.** You not only have the right, but you must take responsibility for how you allow others to treat you. Your boundaries act as filters permitting what is acceptable in your life and what is not. If you don't have boundaries that protect and define you, as in a strong sense of identity, you tend to derive your sense of worth from others. Identify the actions and behaviors that you find unacceptable. Let others know when they've crossed the line, acted inappropriately, or disrespected you in any way. Do not be afraid to tell others when you need emotional and physical space.
- **Trust and believe in yourself.** You know what you need, want, and value. Don't let anyone else make the decisions for you. Healthy boundaries make it possible for you to respect your strengths, abilities and individuality as well as those of others.

HOW TO SET PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES

- Identify or define the desired boundary
- Communicate what is needed - Don't overexplain – state why it is important

Examples:

- Parent Child – parent may ask children to not enter the bedroom without knocking – privacy
- Child – may ask parent to not read their diary
- Romantic relationship – asking for one night out per week to spend time by him/herself and not to see one another each day; asking partner to assist with the baby so that she can take care of herself
- Friendship – someone is in the middle of studying and her friend comes to visit unannounced – she may ask her to not stay too long.
- Counsellor – respond to client emails during office hours
- Teacher and Student – teacher may set healthy boundaries by choosing to keep their personal lives separate from their professional lives by not telling their students too much about their private lives

CONCLUSION

- Setting healthy boundaries is a crucial part of life and an important aspect of any self-care practice.
- Someone who's not used to setting boundaries might feel guilty or selfish when they first start out, but setting boundaries is necessary for mental health and well-being.
- Appropriate boundaries can look very different depending on the setting, and it's important to set them in all aspects of one's life
- While setting boundaries is crucial, it is even more crucial to respect the boundaries that others have set for themselves.

When we begin to set boundaries with people we love, a really hard thing happens: they hurt. They may feel a hole where you used to plug up their aloneness, their disorganization, or their financial irresponsibility. Whatever it is, they will feel a loss. If you love them, this will be difficult for you to watch. But when you are dealing with someone who is hurting, remember that your boundaries are both necessary for you and helpful for them. If you have been enabling them to be irresponsibly, your limit setting may nudge them toward responsibility.

**- Henry Cloud and John Townsend;
Boundaries**

“ Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others. ”
- Brene Brown

Further reading:

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life
(Dr Henry Cloud and Dr John Townsend)

Contact us

We are available by e-mail:

- Send an e-mail to counselling@unisa.ac.za should you need to discuss any needs you may have in terms of further support.

Visit our website

For more resources like these, visit our website:

www.unisa.ac.za/counselling

Thank you

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