

Exploring Beyond Divorce

Session 12 Summary - Setting Personal Boundaries

DEFINING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

- **CORE DEFINITION:** Personal boundaries are the guidelines, rules, or limits a person creates to identify what are reasonable, safe, and permissible ways for others to behave around them.
- **PURPOSE:** The goal is to communicate these boundaries, so others understand what is acceptable behavior. They also define how an individual will respond when someone crosses those limits.
- **FOUNDATION:** Boundaries are constructed from a combination of one's beliefs, opinions, attitudes, past experiences, and social learning. They help define an individual by outlining their likes and dislikes.
- **SCOPE:** Boundaries set the distances one allows others to approach and encompass multiple dimensions:
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Psychological
 - Spiritual (involving beliefs, emotions, intuitions, and self-esteem)
- **DIRECTIONALITY:** They operate in two directions, affecting both incoming and outgoing interactions between people.

10 STEPS TO SETTING AND MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

1. NAME YOUR LIMITS

- You cannot set good boundaries if you are unsure of where you stand.
- Identify your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual limits.
- Consider what you can tolerate versus what makes you feel uncomfortable or stressed. Your feelings are a guide to identifying your limits.

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2. TUNE INTO YOUR FEELINGS

- Two key "red flag" feelings indicate your boundaries are being crossed: discomfort and resentment.
- On a scale of 1 to 10, any feeling over a 3 or 4 could signal a boundary violation.
- Resentment often indicates you are being taken advantage of, are unappreciated, are pushing past your own limits, or someone is imposing their expectations on you.

3. BE DIRECT

- With people who have similar communication styles and personalities, direct dialogue may not be necessary.
- With those who have a different personality or cultural background, you must be more direct about your boundaries.

4. GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION

- Fear, guilt, and self-doubt are major obstacles. You might fear another's response or feel guilty saying "no" to a family member.
- Remind yourself that boundaries are a sign of a healthy relationship and self-respect. Give yourself permission to set and preserve them.

5. PRACTICE SELF-AWARENESS

- Setting boundaries is about honing in on and honoring your feelings.

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- If you find yourself failing to sustain your boundaries, ask yourself:
 - "What am I doing or what is the other person doing?"
 - "What is the situation eliciting that's making me resentful or stressed?"
 - "What am I going to do about the situation?"
 - "What do I have control over?"

6. CONSIDER YOUR PAST AND PRESENT

- Your upbringing and family role can be obstacles. If you were a "caretaker," you may have learned to focus on others' needs at the expense of your own.
- Evaluate your current relationships: Are they reciprocal with a healthy give-and-take?
- Assess your environments (work, family) to determine if they are unhealthy.

7. MAKE SELF-CARE A PRIORITY

- Give yourself permission to put yourself first. This strengthens your motivation to set boundaries.
- Self-care involves recognizing the importance of your feelings and honoring yourself.
- When you are in a better emotional place, you can be more present for others as a better wife, mother, husband, or friend.

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8. SEEK SUPPORT

- If you struggle with boundaries, seek support from resources like support groups, church, counseling, coaching, and good friends.
- Practice setting boundaries with friends or family and hold each other accountable.
- Consider using other resources, such as books on the topic.

9. BE ASSERTIVE

- It is not enough to create boundaries; you must follow through on them.
- Do not expect people to be mind readers. You must assertively communicate when a boundary has been crossed.
- In a respectful manner, let the other person know what is bothersome and that you can work together to address it.

10. START SMALL... BUT START

- Like any new skill, assertive communication takes practice.
- Begin by setting a small, non-threatening boundary.
- Build upon your successes and incrementally increase to more challenging boundaries without taking on something that feels overwhelming at first.

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BOUNDARY QUESTIONS FOR SELF-REFLECTION

- Do you have a hard time standing up for yourself?
- Do you keep agreeing to do things that you really don't want to do?
- Do you tolerate rude comments or pushy people because you can't handle conflict?
- Do you take things personally?
- What boundary is most important for you to implement and why?
- What boundary was often broken in your past relationships?
- What is the toughest part for you in setting boundaries?