

DESCRIPTION OF BOUNDARIES

RIGID BOUNDARIES

Physical:

- Stiff body posture
- Stoic
- Uncomfortable being touched.
- Avoids showing affection to others
- Does not react or under-reacts
- “Stone face”
- Very predictable behavior

Emotional:

- Appears insensitive to the feelings of others
- Appears aloof and disinterested
- Does not show or talk about feelings
- Seems emotionally numb
- Attempts to meet needs and wants on their own
- Has difficulty asking for or accepting help from others
- Does not react or underreacts emotionally
- Has difficulty giving or receiving from others

Rigid ~ She lets everyone know exactly where she stands. Is immovable. She will do things her way, even if it means doing it alone.

Buzz words: too closed, inflexible, no spontaneity, unyielding, non-negotiable, unchangeable, stubborn, adamant, hard

Distant ~ She is emotionally or physically unavailable. Others might never know what she wants, who she really is, or even where she is.

Buzz words: far, unreachable, disconnected, absent, non-communicative, alone, aloof, cold, removed, cool?

LACK OF BOUNDARIES

Physical:

- Does not like being alone
- Touches others without asking
- Allows touch even when it feels inappropriate
- Is not aware of their own needs
- Imposes on the privacy of others
- Allows physical space to be invaded

- Overreacts to the feelings and behaviors of others
- Personalizes
- Others influence behavior
- Is unpredictable

Emotional:

- Feels everything
- Cannot contain feelings
- Over discloses
- Is dependent on others for emotional well-being
- Gets too close too fast
- Feels like a victim
- Experiences prolonged resentments
- Is overwhelmed and preoccupied with others
- Says “yes” wants to say “no”
- Feels responsible for the feelings of others
- Identity tied to being in an intimate relationship
- Overcompensates
- Expects others to meet needs
- Gives too much
- Takes too much
- Unable to respect the rights of others

Invisible ~ She knows what she wants and feels, but doesn’t do anything about it now. She doesn’t tell others what she feels or wants, nor assert herself or her limits in a manner that will be heard or heeded.

Buzz words: too open, non-assertive, pushover, over-adapts, feels used and hurt, her gut says “no” while her mouth says “yes”, passive.

Enmeshed ~ She takes on her partner’s likes and dislikes as her own. She becomes other people. This boundary type tends to have no opinions of her own.

Buzz words: over-lapped, yes-person, wishy-washy, two-faced, too close.

Intrusive ~ She pushes everyone to go along with whatever she thinks or wants, regardless of her or the other’s desires. She seems (or truly is) oblivious to others’ discomfort or resentment due to her behaviors or words.

Buzz words: pushy, insensitive, bold, outgoing, invasive, bossy, interfering.

Hyper-Receptive ~ She has no time to realize what she really wants; she puts all of her energy into avoiding conflict and making sure there is no conflict around her. She can’t handle the experience of others’ uncomfortable feelings and thinks of them as her own. Can’t tell the difference between what she feels and what others feel. She tends to take in too much from her surroundings, waits for cues from others, is hyper-vigilant, and anticipates others’ desires.

Buzz words: chameleon, sponge, too sensitive.

PARTIAL BOUNDARIES

Physical:

- Has extremes in need for physical space or closeness
- May have rigid or healthy boundaries in
- some circumstances and fragile boundaries in others,
- particularly in intimate relationships.

Emotional:

- Has mood swings
- Is indirect –
- Example: Shares feelings about marriage
- with mother rather than with husband.
- Is emotionally inconsistent

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Physical:

- Makes physical boundaries clear to others
- Respects and is sensitive to the needs and
- rights of others
- Can negotiate and compromise
- Asks permission before touching others

Emotional:

- Shares feelings appropriately and directly
- Is assertive
- Is interdependent
- Identifies choices
- Makes mistakes without damage to self-esteem
- Has an internal sense of personal identity
- Can allow “differentness” in others
- Tolerates and accepts differences of opinion without altering their own
- Is sensitive to feelings of others (empathetic)

Of these types, put a check mark next to the one that typifies your boundaries, the boundaries of your mother, your father, and the partners you are drawn to. Do you see any connection?

Adapted from Six Boundary Types. Joan Case