

Appendix 3-B: Signs of Unhealthy Boundaries

Trusting no one – trusting anyone – black and white thinking
Telling all
Talking at an intimate level on your first meeting
Falling in love with new acquaintances
Being overwhelmed by a person – preoccupied
Acting on first sexual impulse
Being sexual for partner, not self
Going against personal values or rights to please others
Not noticing when someone else violates your boundaries
Ignoring it when someone else violates your boundaries
Not noticing when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries
Ignoring when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries
Accepting food, gifts, touch, sex that you do not want
Touching someone without getting permission
Taking as much as you can for the sake of getting
Giving as much as you can for the sake of giving
Allowing someone to take as much as they can/want from you
Letting others direct your life
Letting others describe your reality
Believing others can anticipate your needs
Expecting others to fill your needs automatically
Falling apart so someone will take care of you
Self-abuse
Self-neglect
Sexual and physical abuse
Disordered eating
Food abuse
Spiritual abuse
Too dependent or anti-dependent in relationships with those close to you
Substance abuse

From my experience helping clients set their own necessary boundaries in their lives, I have observed two major areas that must be addressed. First, we need to discover the beliefs and emotional patterns that block our ability to set boundaries (for example, "it is never OK to displeas[e] a friend or relative"). Second, we need to know, on a practical level, specifically how to go about setting and maintaining clear boundaries.

For many of us, our families of origin did not model healthy boundaries. Recovery often involves virtually "starting from scratch." Referring back to the room analogy, imagine you had grown up in a cave, or in an open prairie with no shelter. You would need to learn about a variety of things, including the nature and purpose of walls, windows, doors, etc., how they are constructed, what makes them resilient, and different designs/materials to choose from. You would need to assess your own lifestyle, tastes, practical needs, local climate, etc., and determine the best combination for you. Redefining boundaries is a process that involves gaining new awareness, exploring