



Your Childhood Boundary

Model

Your ability to draw boundaries with love and kindness is heavily influenced by the type of environment you grew up in and what you witnessed from your family of origin. You may have learnt to disregard your own needs and instead focus on meeting the needs of others ever since your childhood. For example, if your mum was constantly taking care of everyone else, then you may find yourself as a parent, friend or employee doing the same. And feeling drained with no time for yourself today.

In some families, boundaries were not taught or even allowed. If this is the message you grew up with, then chances are that belief is still driving your life and relationships. If this is the case for you, there is a good chance that you have under-developed personal boundaries.



Some of us grew up in a dysfunctional family. Those are families with multiple ‘internal’ conflicts, e.g. sibling rivalries, parent-child conflicts, domestic violence, mental illness, single parenthood, or ‘external’ conflicts, e.g. alcohol or drug abuse, extramarital affairs, gambling, unemployment-influences that affect the basic needs of the family unit. In such families, parents may end up not respect their children's personal freedom and privacy. They discount their children's feelings, do not honor their attempts at independent thinking and decision-making, and do not allow them to experience their impulses toward creativity, spirituality and self actualization.

When parents disrespect or violate their child's boundaries, the child's sense of self—his or her autonomy, self-respect, feelings of effectiveness and of making a difference, are compromised. Children make meaning out of the events they witness and the things that happen to them, and they create an internal map of how the world is.

The following questions are for you to spend time answering, in order to understand how your personal boundaries could be related to how you grew up. How your upbringing became the MODEL for how you function as an adult today. These questions are not meant to diagnose or label. It is my intention to get you thinking about any limitations you may have in establishing healthy boundaries.

Some of these questions are closed-ended question, normally only requiring a yes or no answer. However, in this exercise, they are planted as questions to trigger memories and be thought-provoking. To serve as a way for you to see how your upbringing impacted the ways in which you are able to set healthy boundaries today, or not. Through your journaling, answering these questions can offer more clarity about how your past is still impacting your ability or inability to set healthy boundaries today. If answering these questions unearths difficult feelings, I recommend you seek the help of a counselor.

Personal Expression

- Was I encouraged or discouraged to express my individual feelings, especially if they differed from the majority? (Was I allowed to differentiate from them?)
- How am I censoring what I really think or feel today?
- Did I have to redirect my own desires and wishes because there was greater problem to be solved in the family?
- Was there one person in the family system who was more controlling or domineering, or required more attention than everyone else?
- Did my parents problem solve with calm conversation or with verbal or physical violence?
- When have I hidden my true self because I was afraid of what others would think?

Personal Value

- Did I often or very often feel that no one in my family loved me growing up?
- Do I remember feeling I was important or special growing up?
- Did my family look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
- What relationships in my life today make me feel worse about myself instead of better?
- What was my caretakers' response to me when I was full of aliveness, curiosity or energy?
- How was I expected to behave in my family as a child? Be silent? Good? Perfect?
- How do I sabotage myself today?



Personal Space

- Did I grow up in a family where everyone knew what was going on in my life, whether I wanted them to or not?
- How was I raised in regards to personal space? Were people allowed to have privacy in the home I grew up in? If so, in what ways? (Was I allowed to close bedroom doors or bathroom doors? Could you have a private phone conversation?)
- Were my parents super protective or gave me too much freedom?
- In what ways might I have felt invaded or neglected as a child?
- Do I need a lot of personal space? Do I feel have my own space today?
- Am I OK with people touching me, hugging me, in my personal bubble?
- Did I have an affectionate family or a family that didn't interact? How does that have an effect on how I interact with my kids/spouse?
- Did I experience embarrassing situations when I was a child?
- In what areas of my life am I trading authenticity for safety, or what appears to be safe?



Time

- When I was a child, did I have control over how I spent my time, or did my parents control that?
- In what ways was I expected to put others' needs ahead of my own? And be available for others when perhaps I did not want to.
- In what ways do I feel responsible for everyone and everything today?
- Who owns my time today? Is it my work or family? My spouse or kids?
- Do I resent that? What price do I pay in freedom?
- How are people taking advantage of my time today? And in what ways do I let them?
- Am I doing these actions because I'm guilted into it? Because I can't say no?
- How do I want to use my time?
- Am I able to set boundaries to make sure I have the time I need?
- What primary coping strategy did I develop as a child that I still use today?

