

SOME EXAMPLES OF UNHEALTHY AND HEALTHY BOUNDARIES IN YOUR LIFE AND IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PEOPLE

UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

You feel uncertain and confused about your likes, dislikes, feelings, thoughts, wants, needs, values, and goals

You have difficulty telling others about your likes, dislikes, goals, feelings, thoughts, wants, needs, and values (especially if you think they will not approve of or will disagree with what you are saying)

You have great difficulty saying “no” and setting clear and straightforward limits with others when you need to do so and you allow others to manipulate and violate your attempts to do this

You change your feelings, opinions, actions, or plans to fit the mood and whims of someone else or the circumstances around you (i.e. you live reactively)

You settle for simply “getting by” in life because you think that this is all you can realistically expect for yourself

You act in a passive and compliant way (generally giving in to others) or in an aggressive and controlling manner (trying to dominate and “take charge” of others)

You feel uncertain, afraid, inadequate, and confused much of the time and are plagued by negative, cynical, shaming, vindictive, or destructive self-talk

You become enmeshed in a “life script” that seems to be “going nowhere” and feels completely beyond your control

You are living a life that does not seem like one of your own choosing

You allow others to abuse and disrespect you, your children (if you have them), and others important to you or you do these same things to other people

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

You know yourself and feel pretty clear about your likes, dislikes, feelings, thoughts, wants, needs, values, and goals

You are open, direct, and assertive in sharing your likes, dislikes, goals, dreams, feelings, thoughts, wants, needs, and values (even if others do not approve of or agree with what you are saying about yourself)

You are willing to say “no” and set clear limits with others whenever this becomes necessary

You are aware of others’ moods and the circumstances around you and can be flexible at times, but you remain grounded and centered within yourself and make decisions based on what is actually important to you

You look for and expect to live a life that involves fullness, richness, passion, growth, and the entire range of human emotions

You act in an assertive, honest, direct, and respectful manner with other people

You feel self-confident, self-assured, and lovable most of the time and regularly focus on more positive self-talk and notice and intervene in negative self-talk when it does arise

You recognize the “life script” you are living from your childhood and modify it in whatever ways are necessary so that it reflects who you really are and want to be as a person in the present

You are aware of your internal thought and emotional process and of the choices that you have in your life and you live in a proactive and effective way

You stand up for yourself (and those you love) whenever necessary and figure out effective ways to respond even in difficult and uncomfortable situations

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UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

You see your partner (and others) as responsible for taking care of you and creating your “happiness” and making your life “okay”

You have few interests, activities, and hobbies that absorb your attention and you tend to follow along with what others want or expect you to do

You accept excuses, “reasons,” and justifications for disrespectful, compulsive, or irresponsible behavior by others and tend not to hold other people truly accountable for what they say and do

You completely deny, avoid, and “stuff” your anger or act out your anger in hurtful and destructive ways

You act out your emotional pain from the past and present in an irresponsible, disrespectful, compulsive, or addictive manner

You worry excessively about making mistakes, being judged and criticized by others, or appearing “silly” or “stupid” to others

You feel a strong need to take care of and “fix” other people, even when they do not want you to do this, and your self-esteem often depends on your ability to make this happen

You expect others to take care of and “fix” you and your problems, even when they have no interest in taking on this task or they realize that this is not really possible

You will “do anything” to stay in a relationship with a partner, even if remaining in it is hurtful and destructive to you or to the other person

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

You recognize and assume full responsibility for taking care of yourself and feeling good about yourself, your interactions with others, and your life in general

You have clear preferences and likes and dislikes about how you spend your time and make choices that allow you to participate in the activities you enjoy

You have strong personal values and standards that, although they can be flexible, lead you to expect that others will also take responsibility for themselves and be accountable for their actions

You recognize your anger when it arises and you address it in an effective and problem-solving manner

You become aware of your destructive acting-out behaviors and learn to effectively intervene in them when they threaten to become a part of your life

You work hard to be who you really are no matter what the circumstances or with whom you are spending time and realize that others may not like your “true self” and that making mistakes is simply a part of being human

You are willing to offer assistance, encouragement, and support to others, but you have a clear sense that their life path is their choice and your self-esteem is not connected to altering or controlling their life journey

You are willing to actively seek help and support from others but are fully aware that your issues and problems are ultimately yours to address and “fix” and that no one else can do it for you

You are fully open to and willing to be committed to a loving and intimate relationship with a partner but you have reasonable personal expectations about what you want and need and are willing to offer this same thing to another person in such a committed relationship

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UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES

You let go of family relationships and friends who are important to you due to pressure from a partner who feels jealous of them or who does not like them

You tend to obsess about your own and others' problems, which often leads to confusion, indecision, paralysis, and misery

You share too much too quickly with other people to try to achieve "instant intimacy" and immediate emotional closeness or you are "overly careful" in sharing anything of who you really are with others

Your self-esteem is often based on whether other people like and approve of you

You expect and believe that you and others should be able to "mind-read" and anticipate and fill other people's wants and needs automatically

You allow others to describe and create your "reality" and direct your life

You offer excuses, "reasons," rationalizations, and justifications for your own disrespectful, compulsive, or irresponsible behavior and work hard to "let yourself off the hook" by not being truly accountable for what you say and do

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

You listen to and take into account your partner's feedback related to his/her concerns about others who are a part of your life, but you are clear with your partner and within yourself that it is your decision with whom you will interact and spend your time

You are aware of and willing to proactively address problems in your own and others' lives and look for effective ways to intervene in them but you also realize the limitations of what you can do with and for others

You realize that building intimacy in any relationship takes time and you gradually share more about who you are as your relationship with the other person grows

Your self-esteem is based on learning to know and love yourself and you realize that you cannot, through who you are or what you do, guarantee that anyone else will like, respect, or approve of you

You understand that you and others have to communicate wants and needs openly and directly if others are going to have a clear sense of what someone else wishes in a particular situation and you do not have the expectation that you or others are going to be able to "mind-read" with another person, no matter how close the relationship is

You view yourself as a proactive player in your life and take full responsibility to interpret your "reality" and actively direct your life through the decisions you make

You take full and clear responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, actions, and inaction and work hard to learn from your own disrespectful, compulsive, or irresponsible behavior