

The Couples Cure

Miraculous Recovery for Couples on the Brink

Phase 1: Getting Real With Yourself (Turning Inward)

Lesson 3: Embracing Boundaries

The reason why I'm excited about this next lesson, it's the final lesson in this phase one, where we're really getting connected with ourselves, there's the self-awareness piece going inward and getting super clear on who you are, and what it means to authentically express who you are. This has to happen before we can get into the relational stuff, into the emotional connection stuff, into the tools and the strategies. The boundaries piece, which is the third lesson, is absolutely critical and an essential part of knowing yourself and developing that self-awareness because we don't know who we are without boundaries. Boundaries literally define us. We're going to be diving in to look at what boundaries really are. I think they're a lot more nuanced and profoundly powerful in ways that aren't really obvious until you actually live them. When we think of boundaries traditionally, there's a lot that gets missed because we tend to think of them as just saying "no" to somebody or protecting our time, protecting ourselves somehow. It's a lot more than that. It's super important. I would go so far as to say that all relationship problems come down to boundary failures on some level. On some level, there's a boundary issue at stake when the relationship isn't working out. For this lesson, we're really going to be looking at what boundaries are actually. I'm going to kind of explain to you with what are the definitions of boundaries and the different types of boundaries. Then we're going to look at what purpose do they serve, how they actually work in action, we can sort of picture them in action in broad strokes. Then I'm going to go into detail about how you can not only communicate your boundaries and identify your boundaries, but actually enforce them over time.

I love this quote. This captures it really really well. "The most important distinction anyone can ever make in their life is between who they are as an individual and their connection with others." *Anné Linden*

That's super foundational. If you really get this, this is going to be a game-changer for you in your relationship. Not only your romantic relationship with your spouse, but your family relationships, your relationships with your friends, and really everyone in your life. This is so foundational. So let's dive right in and let's talk about what boundaries actually are. There's a lot of definitions but I chose just a couple sustained ones. This is from Pia Melody. She's a codependency expert. She wrote a book called "Facing Codependence," I think some of you might have read that already. She says that:

Boundary systems are invisible and symbolic "force fields" that have three purposes:

1. To keep people from coming into our space and abusing us,
2. To keep us from going into the space of others and abusing them, and
3. To give each of us a way to embody our sense of who we are.

Now, Brené Brown gives a really much simpler definition: A boundary is what's okay and what's not okay.

I like to say boundaries are where we end and where others begin. They're like the borders that define us. They're the line between what we can handle and what we can't handle, what we can tolerate or what we can't tolerate. It's essentially the line between ourselves and the world around us. It's almost like cell membranes. If you think about a cell in an organism, the cell membrane is what divides the cell from the rest of the organism. But the cell, when it's really healthy and it's functioning really well, it's working together very closely with other cells. They're all together. They're working together. They're right up against each other. So, they're very close. They're in tandem but there's a very clear boundary. If that membrane isn't healthy and there's too much permeability, then that causes problems and that creates disease or lack of health in that organism. Same with if the walls are not porous enough and not enough information can be communicated back and forth between the cells. It's the same thing. It's the same thing, it's going to create some kind of health issues. It will compromise the health of that organism. It's the same for us as human beings.

I want to mention that there's actually two different kinds of boundaries. We're going to be looking at both today.

Two Kinds of Boundaries:

1. External Boundaries (Terry Real calls them *protective boundaries*) - These are the kind of boundaries that we usually tend to think about.
 - Protection from external, negative encroachments (demands, shaming, blaming, etc) - These are the kind of boundaries where we're really negotiating the space between us and the physical world, the sexual world, and the psychological world outside of us. It's the boundaries to help us shield ourselves from negative encroachments or transgressions from others, that could be demanding, that could be shaming, it could be blaming, it could be abuse, anything that undermines our autonomy in the relationship.
 - These protect us from others.
2. Internal Boundaries (also be called *containing boundaries*)
 - Containment of internal impulses and reactions (anger, contempt, righteousness etc). - These are the kind of boundaries that keep the world of our thoughts and our feelings and attitudes and our behavior separate from others. They keep stuff in and protect others from us in a sense. These will help us regulate our reactivity and our impulses. If we have anger or contempt or righteousness or just our adaptive child starts to take over and we behave in ways that compromise closeness with others, that's when we really need to develop strong containing or internal boundaries.
 - They protect others from us.
When you have both of these kinds of boundaries you can have protection and intimacy as opposed to being walled off, which would provide protection but no intimacy. Or on the flip side, being boundary-less, which might give you a sense of closeness but it offers no protection or safety or sense of self. Both of these really need to be in place.

Now, if you're kind of wondering, *is this something that applies to me? Do I need better boundaries? I don't really know if I do or not.* I'm just going to go into some signs and some symptoms that would indicate that boundaries are in order or better boundaries or further development of your boundaries are in order.

You Need Better Boundaries IF:

- You Experienced Boundary Violations During Formative Years
 - ❖ You had no right to privacy
Some of those things would include like if you grew up in a house where you had no right to privacy and at any moment somebody could just barge in and could go through your journal. Or would reveal information about you that you have shared in confidence to other people. And you felt ashamed because you felt like you couldn't trust a person. That you really didn't have a place for your own privacy or a safe person that you could share something privately with.
 - ❖ Physical punishment was common
If there was physical punishment, if that was a really common thing, and I'm not talking about just an occasional spanking, which I don't like. I'm not a fan of any form of spanking. But I'm talking about where it was really common to act out punishment physically. That would be considered a chronic boundary violation.
 - ❖ People were frequently interrupted while speaking
If you grew up in a house where people were frequently interrupted while speaking. I grew up in a house like that. I still have to work on not interrupting people because it just becomes so ingrained in you, especially in those first seven years of your life. We just download what's in our environment and that becomes our default mode or our template of experience or way of relating.
 - ❖ Blaming others was common among adults
If you also grew up in a house or you were around a lot of blaming or blaming others was just really common among the adults, like that was just what people did, they would blame others for the outcomes of their life. No one was really sharing about themselves. They were more just pointing the finger all the time.
 - ❖ People would go silent rather than communicate
Also, when people would get overwhelmed, they would either lose control or just goes totally silent. Like shut down, silent treatment, not talk to you for a few days, rather than communicate what's really going on inside of them.

- ❖ You couldn't say no without being guilty
And then finally, if you grew up where you really were not able to say no, if you couldn't say no without being guilty or being told that you were selfish or being yelled at. If your connection was compromised ever with your caregiver or your parent or even older siblings by having a boundary, then you might have internalized that it just really isn't safe to say no or to have a boundary on some level. Like if you're going to lose connection as a child for saying no or having a preference or trying to set some kind of boundary, then on some unconscious level, that can be internalized as a lack of safety, even if it's not conscious.

If any of this resonates with you, that's an indication that you could really use some better boundaries.

Also, you need better boundaries if you find yourself asking these questions. These are the questions that I hear that tell me we need to work on boundaries:

- Do I have the right to be mad right now?
Do I have the right to feel that way? Or is it okay for me to feel that way? Questioning your own response and wondering if your feelings are okay with what's happening. Feeling like you might not have the right to feel the way that you feel is an indication.
- How could they even THINK that?
If you are wounded by even what somebody would think of you, that could be a psychological boundary failure. Like really being derailed to the point of ruminating and obsessing because you can't believe that somebody else perceives it that way or perceives you that way or sees it differently, that feels threatening to you on some level. That's an indication of a boundary issue.
- Is it me? Or is it them?
Asking the question *is it me? Or is it them? I can't tell, like, is it just me?* I feel really strongly about this one minute and then the next minute, I'm thinking, *oh my gosh, this is all their fault.* You really just can't tell whose is this issue, like, *what am I actually reacting to?* That's an indication of a boundary issue.
- Is this ok with me?
Also questioning *is this okay with me?* Something that you're going along with that you're not really sure if that's okay with you or not. Or if you know it's not okay and you're still going along with it, that would apply as well.
- How do I get them to...see/understand/stop/start etc.
And then, anytime you're asking the question, *how do I get them to see this? How do I get them to stop doing that? How do I get them to start doing this? How can I get them to anything?* You're not as much in your lane psychologically. When you're really strong with your boundaries, you recognize that that's actually not your job. You have a lot more leverage staying in your lane. This is a failure to recognize the power that you have on your side of that line.

Another thing that indicates that you need better boundaries is if you grapple with the following:

- Resentment (anger not expressed)
If you really struggle with on an ongoing level resentment, which is essentially anger that's not expressed. Resentment is one of the biggest signs that you are allowing your boundaries to be crossed a lot and then being mad at the other person for that. If you also are passive-aggressive or acting out your resentment, you realize, *well, they're doing that but it's partly because I'm not speaking up*, that kind of resentment.
- Feeling submissive or walking on eggshells
Also feeling submissive or walking on eggshells. Feeling afraid to say something. Feeling like the urge to keep the peace is so much stronger that you will end up compromising your own lines on things that are really important to you.
- Constant complaining
If you are complaining a lot. Whether it's to others, your friends, other family members. You're complaining a lot. We all

complain and there is such a thing as healthy complaining, right, and a health event session. But when it's really a big part of your life and how you associate processing through something is pretty much the same as complaining, then you're in a really disempowered place. You're not using boundaries to your advantage.

- Feeling like a victim

If you have that sense of victimhood, it's along the same lines of what I just said of not recognizing your own power and feeling like they have all the power and it's all their fault, then you're in that sort of victim mindset frequently, then you need better boundaries.

- Anxiety about another's reaction

- Ruminating on the person or situation

Ruminating on other person or situation, really trying to analyze like what's going on for them, trying to see it from their point of view all the time in order to make it okay that you aren't holding your own boundary, that's a sign.

- Giving up important self-care or activities

Giving up important self-care or important activities or things that really matter to you a lot that you wish you could do, that you feel like, if you were to do those things that you would be compromising your relationship or that your relationship would suffer as a result.

- Fatigue

If you have ongoing fatigue or other physical issues because you're just really drained from your relationship issues or dynamics, that can be a sign of very poor boundaries because you're energetically very drained from trying to navigate things that are actually not on your side of the street. That causes a lot of fatigue.

- Being short with loved ones

Being really irritable or short with loved ones. They ask you a simple question or they call your name and you're already snapping. That's a sign that your boundaries have not been upheld properly.

- You feel invisible

If you feel invisible. That's a boundary violation, too, in terms of feeling like perhaps you're not asking for the things that you need.

- Feeling smothered or being smothering

- Excessive detachment

- Lack of privacy

If you have a lack of privacy, where you feel like everything that's personal to you, cannot be talked about at home because your spouse will get really mad. It will cause a really really big problem. If you just even feel like you can't have a moment to yourself. If you can't just draw a line around your time, or your personal space, that kind of lack of privacy.

Now in contrast, people with good boundaries can:

- Empathize without taking things on

They're really able to empathize without taking things on. Maybe you know people like this or maybe you've had moments like this, when you're feeling really strong. I just want to paint a picture of what it looks like when people do have good boundaries. They're able to really have empathy for people because they don't feel responsible. They don't feel drained by them. They have enough of a sense of separateness that they can really feel with them without taking it on as their own. Or without having to keep them separate or judge them as a way of protecting their own energy.

- Keep an intact sense of self

People with good boundaries also keep an intact sense of self. They're just really secure in who they are and they're not really second guessing themselves all the time. They speak their truth more freely. They're not as worried about those things because they know who they are and it's just like an automatic thing. It's not even something they take it for granted. It's probably not

even conscious. This is something that you can learn. If you don't already have this, this is something that can become automatic and can become unconscious to the point of like, *I can take that for granted now because I've built it*. If you're not here yet, don't worry, we'll get there.

- Be ok when others aren't

People with good boundaries can be okay when other people aren't. They can feel like, *my spouse is having a bad day but that doesn't mean my day is bad. It doesn't mean it's my fault. It doesn't mean I need to match that person's affect. It doesn't mean I have to feel the same things that they feel. I can actually be okay even when they're not and I can still be there for them*. It's sort of like empathizing without taking things on. It's even when it's to the point where the negative energy around you bounces off of you.

- Be truthful in loving ways

People with good boundaries are also really truthful in loving ways. When I say this, what I really mean is that they're honest about where they're really at, what's really going on inside of them. That's congruence. That's like, let's say for example, when I say congruence I mean, where your behavior is in alignment or congruent with your feelings, how you're showing up and what you're communicating is true to what's really going on inside is. When the outside of you matches the inside of you. That's congruence. So let's say if your spouse has betrayed your trust in some way, maybe they've said hurtful things to you and then they act like things are fine. A boundary in this case would be being really truthful about not feeling happy or close when they assume everything is fine and it hasn't been repaired and you're still feeling hurt by it. Then you can be congruent and be honest and say, "you know I really love you but I don't trust you right now. I can't really be close with you until we work this out," or "I can't share my feelings with you yet," "I'm not going to be able to share that with you if you're going to be turning the tables on me and so I can't really feel that close to you," or "I love you but I'm gonna have to keep my distance until we repair this." So that's that strength of that boundary of *I don't have to be the one to fix something that you broke. I don't have to pretend like I'm fine with something just so we can restore connection*. There's a security in that. Good boundaries allow you to be able to withstand the loss of connection temporarily because you are not willing to compromise your sense of self in order to maintain the connection. Does that make sense?

THE PURPOSE OF BOUNDARIES

Now we're going to move into the purpose of boundaries. We're not getting into the *how* yet. I know I'm setting this up a lot. This is really important to understand as a frame around actually doing the work, the actual identification and execution of the boundaries and the holding of the boundaries in action, it can get really challenging. So I want to make sure that you have a strong grounding in the frame that I'm putting around this that *what are the benefits, what are the purpose, how are these actually going to work for you* so that you can come back to this when things really get challenging. You're going to see what I mean as we go along. But I just want to sort of plant this seed for you right now, especially if you're listening to this and you know *this is something I'm going to have to do but I think it's kind of scary*. I want to sort of outline the purpose and the numerous benefits of boundaries that are going to work in your favor. The reason why people with good boundaries are able to show up the way that I just described and the reason why boundaries are so foundational to healthy relationships is because they have multiple benefits. Multiple benefits that you may not have thought of. Like most people don't realize the connection between boundaries and the things I'm going to share. The implications of good boundaries are huge. They're massive in their way, way beyond the simple assertion of a limit in the moment. It's really transformative for the relationship in general.

Boundaries are going to:

- Clarify ownership

So the first thing is boundaries are going to clarify ownership. That's the very first thing it does. That's just knowing what's ours and what's not ours. We're not confused with boundaries. We know what's not ours we see the line and that right away answers a lot of questions that we might be having. It lets us let go a lot of things that we might be holding on to or trying to deal with. Once we realize, *oh, that's not even mine*, then we can let that go. We have so much more energy to use in this work. If you've been finding this work draining thus far, the boundaries section is going to help you free up a ton of energy on this work for yourself psychologically and emotionally.

- Delineate responsibility

The second thing it does is it delineates responsibility. It just kind of draws that line and we can say that, "while I know that I

am responsible to my spouse and I'm accountable to them and we are accountable to each other, I am not responsible for them. And they are not responsible for me." That just builds on the ownership, that border of seeing that's on your land, that's on your side, that's yours, therefore, that's your responsibility. And my responsibility is to make sure that my stuff doesn't spill out onto your stuff or that I don't take stuff that's not mine off of your area. That responsibility is a big piece.

- Give you freedom

That in turn then is going to give you a lot of freedom. That's what allows love to grow. Love only exists when there's freedom. We can't really love somebody or have love for somebody if we don't feel free to give it. We have that freedom when we know where the line is. When we feel secure within our own boundaries and when we feel honored in our boundaries by the other person, then we have that freedom to love them in a whole new way.

- Strengthen your self-control

It also helps to strengthen self-control. In this case, I'm talking about containing boundaries so that you're not spilling out what's yours onto someone else. Expecting somebody to take responsibility for something that isn't their responsibility, essentially blaming. When we behave in blaming ways or finger pointing or we're acting out of that adaptive child, strong containing boundaries are gonna keep your self control. You're gonna really develop that internal muscle to be able to recognize an impulse and not act on it. That is going to be everything in this process.

- Communicate productively

They help you communicate more clearly. The reason why is because you automatically know who you are. You automatically know what's yours. You automatically know what's up. You just have mental clarity with boundaries and in those boundaries, because they define who we are, we're able to then communicate more effectively and more productively and authentically knowing who we are, which we can't really do without clear boundaries. That's a really nice side effect. We don't really think about that that the boundary isn't just about blocking someone. It's really about strengthening the communication.

- Create congruence and integrity

I touched on this already but really strong boundaries also create congruence. That means integrity. That's when you're able to not only know your boundary and stand by it through your words, but also stand by it through your actions and your emotional honesty. Where your emotional expression becomes lined up with the actions that you're taking. That's where you come together. When I say integrity, I'm really thinking integrating. Integrity is integrating all parts of us. Sometimes we have a part of us that feels this way and a part of us that feels that way. Or the conscious part of us that wants to set the boundary and the unconscious part of us that wants to not hold the boundary because it doesn't feel safe. So when we integrate those pieces of ourselves and we become congruent, then we have integrity and we feel really good about ourselves. We respect ourselves more. And people around us, they're also just more clear on who we are. It gives them that awareness of us that they can't have of us until we have that and they're not going to feel good about us until we feel good about us. We can't expect people to see that if we can't bring those parts together inside ourselves first, if that makes sense.

- Get leverage

Now another very powerful thing about boundaries is that you get leverage with boundaries. This is like what we talked about, I think in one of our previous group calls recently. It's not cleaning up a mess that isn't yours. If you are not cleaning up a mess that isn't yours because you see where the line is, then that person can see it because you haven't cleaned it up. They'll see it and then if they don't like it, then they'll have to clean it up. Another way of looking is you're not filling in the gap for an emotional connection that you had been doing before. Like if you were doing all the work on something emotionally or you were taking all the initiative on something, doing all the emotional labor, then the other person doesn't feel that gap. They don't have any impetus to fill it because it's already filled. But when you have strong boundaries and you leave that gap or you leave that mess or you just leave that little bit of space and you stay on your side, then the other person, they see their stake in it more easily. They feel more invested. So your boundaries give you leverage in that way. You don't have to do the labor for the other person anymore. It's really helping the other person, especially if your spouse is sort of thinking *the relationship is fine and you're the one that has a problem*. You're more invested in transforming the relationship than they are. It's through boundaries that you get this leverage that then sort of transforms the dynamic where they can then recognize what their part is more clearly, if they're capable, we'll get into that in more detail. Now, if they're not capable, you'll find that out, too. Either way, you're going to get clarity through boundaries. You're going to get leverage with the kind of people that actually are able to change and grow. They will change and grow when they're up against healthy boundaries. That's where all your power comes. It's so important to tap into that.

- Relinquish control

Now, on the other hand, while you're getting leverage with boundaries, you are in a way relinquishing control. And that's a good purpose. You want to relinquish control of certain things. You want to relinquish control of other people's actions and other people's thoughts and the things that you really can't control anyways. So it's really just relinquishing the illusion of control essentially. The reason why this works is, and let me kind of explain this a little bit, you're letting go of the outcome of something. In that sense, you're not really trying to control someone else. You're simply saying with a boundary what you're going to participate in and what you're not going to participate in. We're not actually telling the other person what to do even if we make a request. We're not telling them what to do. We're giving them information with a boundary. We're saying what we can handle and what we can't handle. Then it's up to them to do what they're going to do with that information. We literally just have to let go of that. That can be scary. It's scary to set a boundary. Sometimes people avoid setting boundaries or forcing the question or making a request or drawing that line because then we're taking the risk that the other person might actually disappoint us. When we get clear, then it's going to hurt even more. *What if I'm really clear and then they don't respect that? That might hurt even worse than if it wasn't really clear and I could still kind of make excuses.* It does take a certain amount of strength to set a boundary. The good news is that even though you're relinquishing control, like I said, is that you're really relinquishing the control that you never really had over those things to begin with. It was a losing battle and it was something that is draining your energy and probably causing a lot of resentment. If you're somebody who, I know I was, was trying to control things that were over the line, that only causes resentment in the relationship anyways. People don't like that. Nobody likes to be controlled. People can even tell even if you're not being overt about it, even if you're doing it in covert ways, people can feel that. It's not healthy for the relationship. It doesn't really promote that sense of love and emotional connection.

- Allowing others to grow

The other thing that I sort of touched on in the relinquishing of control and the getting leverage piece is that when you set a strong boundary, what you're doing is allowing others to grow. When you stay on your side of the line, you're allowing other people to be more able to see their part or to make their own decisions, to be who they want to be. We can't really protect people from their own consequences. We can't be the protector or the buffer for the outcome of another person's actions or choices. When we're not operating from good boundaries, we take those consequences away from people. Then they don't get to feel the relationship between their actions and the results, the real outcome of their actions. But when we stay in our lane and we set those boundaries, they can feel that and they can see things more clearly because you're not incriminating yourself. You're reducing confusion. Then they have the opportunity to then grow and change that they wouldn't have had. They wouldn't have that opportunity if you had gotten yourself in the mix.

- Find your true power

What's great about this, too, is as you stay in your own lane and you give other people the opportunity to grow on themselves and you relinquish control, you are in a sense on the flip side, finding your own power. You're finding your own power on a deeper level because you're now taking full responsibility for the things that are on your side. Now that your energy has been freed up on the things that you can't control and crossing the boundary or whatever and you're not going to be a victim anymore, you're remembering your choices. Setting the boundary is remembering your choices. We may want the other person to change their behavior and we hope that they will. It's not like we're going to give up our hopes or wishes for that, for what our vision is and hope our spouse is going to rise to meet us or join us in this process. But we need to own all of our choices in order to empower ourselves and take responsibility for our lives and not sort of let other people dictate how we're going to be responding. So in a sense, it ends up being very empowering in a way that you don't really know until you experience it. At first, it just feels kind of scary, like, you're giving up power but you actually get more power.

- Tap into compassion, love and generosity

The other thing, too, is that boundaries really allow you to tap into compassion and love and generosity. The most loving and compassionate people, as Brené Brown has said before, have the strongest boundaries. We have better empathy because we aren't triggered, because we see it as separate. If somebody else is having something going on and it's not our stuff and we know that it's not ours because we have good boundaries. We see it as separate. We don't feel like we have to defend ourselves. We don't feel like we have to step in and rescue. We don't feel connected to it in a way that brings us down. We were separate enough to be able to actually help a person. It's just like a drowning person can't help another drowning person. You have to not be drowning. You have to be in a very different place. A different foundation, a solid foundation, to help someone who doesn't. You're more generous with stronger boundaries because you're able to help them more from a place of empathy and love and generosity. There's so many ways that this shows up but for now, that's all I'm going to say on that.

- Build trust

The other thing that comes along with this is being able to build the trust that comes from those safe boundaries. When you're holding your own boundaries and you can see that line, you have clarity. *This is mine. I don't have to respond to that. I can let that go.* You can trust other people more because you're not handing them your unboundaried-self and hoping that they'll do a good job with you, you know what I mean? You don't need to trust them that much the way that we need to trust a parent. We don't need to trust our spouse that much if we trust ourselves because we know, if it gets toxic, I'm going to draw the line. I'm going to step out. So in that sense, it builds trust. It also builds trust, in the sense that, when we really do articulate and hold our boundaries and our spouse actually responds to that, which does happen, they start to respect it and see it and honor it in this work together. Then you start to trust them, too. Like, *even if I did have a weak moment and didn't trust and didn't hold my own boundary, I could trust you to honor it still.* But first comes that trust in your own self that allows you to feel like, *I'm not giving my whole safety as a human being to this other person because I'm an adult and I see what I'm responsible for and I trust myself to make good choices for myself.*

- Disrupt the pattern

Then finally, all of this helps you disrupt the pattern, which we've already talked about in the relationship vision and disrupting that old story. These boundaries are going to help you disrupt the pattern because when you see, and I've touched on this before and this is just another way of seeing the benefit of it, but the underlying dynamic is that capacity to be able to take a beat and to be more mindful and to not react so quickly because we have those boundaries. *I see that that's his, I'm going to not respond right away.* You get that pause between the stimulus and the reaction that you can only get with strong boundaries. That pause is what allows you to disrupt and make a choice, a different choice in that moment, to build the new story and to defy the expectations of the old story or the old narrative. That's the whole point, right? I mean, that's why we're doing this, is to create that vision that you did in lesson one.

So what do boundaries look like in action? What does it actually look like, not just theoretically? I'm just going to share with you a few broad strokes ways that good boundaries will show up, just to kind of give an illustration. Then we're going to move into how to do this.

These are just a few of the ways that you will see good boundaries in action:

- Saying what is ok and what is not ok with you

Simply saying what is okay and what is not okay with you. It sounds really simple but it's not because first we have to get clear inside ourselves. And then we have to know that it's okay to communicate that. We have to be able to communicate in the right way. Essentially, it really is that simple, saying what is okay and what is not okay with you. When people are good at that, it looks easy.

- Making a request

It also looks like making a request and clarifying what we're not comfortable with. This is like setting a boundary when you're making a request and letting somebody know. It's taking control of how we allow other people to treat us essentially. Letting know somebody immediately if something's happening that makes us uncomfortable. If a boundary is being crossed, instead of just complaining about it or pointing out what's wrong, we make a request, which is a really empowered way to set a boundary. To communicate your own respect for your own boundary by making a request. A lot of times, we don't make requests because we assume they won't meet our requests or we don't want to take that risk or we just feel even guilty making a request because it wasn't something we ever did. There might be all kinds of reasons why but it really is that simple when you come down to it and once you've done your belief work on this, it's making a request as opposed to focusing on the problem. *What do you want to see instead* and articulating that to the other person.

- Letting somebody know what we can or can't do

It's also letting somebody know what we can or cannot do or what we will or will not do. This is part of saying "no" to somebody, could include saying "no" to somebody or it can be saying "yes" to something under certain conditions, where you can say what the terms are of what you will choose. It's like implementing an informed decision. *I can do that if it's this way. I am willing to do that under these conditions but I can't do it under these conditions.* Setting the terms on what you will do or not do or what you can or cannot do, communicating that confidently, those are really good boundaries in action.

- Knowing we have choices

That's a really big part of this. This goes beyond just the communicating of it. It's really what I'm talking about here is an operating assumption. It's an operating assumption in your psyche. It's the opposite of feeling like a victim. It sounds like, saying to somebody, "Hey, I know there's a few ways to do this. Other people might choose this but for me it makes the most sense to do it this way." Without apology, without second guessing, you know that you have choices. If you do go along with something somebody wants and you don't then like it and you feel that your boundary was crossed, you know that that was on you. Sometimes that'll happen and we'll be like, *okay, I really just didn't communicate that clearly enough*. But you're owning it as your choice.

- Resisting the temptation to spill out onto others

The other thing too is that it shows up as resisting the temptation to spill out onto others. I'm talking now about that high level of self-control. I'm talking about the containing internal boundaries, pausing between the internal reaction and the response, stopping to ask the question, *is the meaning that I'm giving this really true? Am I just seeing this through the lenses of the old story? Or I'm so mad right now. I'm so mad that I know that if I speak right now, it's not going to go well and so I'm going to resist the temptation to speak right now*. That's another example. Asking the question, *how do I speak without dumping on them or violating their boundaries? Or how do I withhold the temptation to maybe hurt the other person because my emotions are so strong right now? Because right now, I don't care but later I will care*. Those are good boundaries in action, too, just from the inside out as well.

Now, boundaries, in order to kind of talk about how they show up, I do want to touch on what they're not. I think it's worth mentioning what boundaries in action are not because there's a lot of misconceptions around this. People do get confused.

So, boundaries are not:

- Setting limits "on" another person

We tend to think of setting limits or like setting boundaries as like putting a limit on another person. Boundaries are not setting limits on another person because we cannot control what others do. When we say, "I'm going to set a boundary on that person," that's actually a false way of even conceptualizing boundaries. We hold our boundaries, not the other person. We can inform them of what that is but that's not something that we do for them or that we put onto them. That's something that we do for ourselves. I'll explain more in detail when we get into the how.

- Ultimatums or threats

They're not ultimatums or threats. I know a lot of people think this. Like you might think in your own relationship, I hear this all the time, *if I set a boundary, my spouse is going to think I'm giving them an ultimatum or I'm threatening them or something*. They might interpret that as a threat or they might interpret that as an ultimatum but that's actually not what's happening if you do it right. I'm going to explain more in a minute. It's not an attempt to control the other person when we set a boundary with someone else because they still have choices. If you're confused on this, I'm hoping that this will become clarified when we get into the *how*, but that's one of the biggest misconceptions and myths that I hear all the time.

- Just a statement to another person

The other thing too is it's not just a statement to the other person. The enforcement of a boundary is a very big part of holding a boundary. We hope that we just have to say it once and then that's going to be the end of it. That's usually not how it works especially if you're trying to dislodge deeply entrenched dynamics that are not healthy in the relationship or if there hasn't been a boundary for many many years and now you're trying to implement a new boundary, that is going to take enforcement. Boundaries are not just the communication of a boundary. They are the ongoing enforcement. That's our job.

- A way to push others away

Boundaries are also not a way to push other people away or keep people out or put a wall up or block people or say no to people or reject people. That's also another very common misconception. On the contrary, boundaries truly give you the freedom and true love that can only exist with that freedom. It's in that safety of being able to say no that brings our walls down. When we know we can hold a boundary, we are going to be less defensive and we're going to be closer. We're going to bring people closer with our boundaries. It's really counter-intuitive when we're first learning this stuff to imagine how stronger boundaries will bring us closer. You'll just have to take my word on that, for now, if you're confused about that, that's only because you probably are thinking about boundaries in the wrong way. I'm going to teach them to you in the right way soon.

- Selfish

The other thing is the boundaries are not selfish. They're in the best interest of everyone. They're in the best interest of everyone that you love. Even if those loved ones feel or think that you're being selfish by setting that boundary. You're not actually doing anybody any favors by crossing your own lines for other people. It may seem that way temporarily. Maybe you are avoiding conflict. Maybe you are avoiding discomfort and avoiding other person's discomfort temporarily. But when you think about the cost to yourself and you think about how that then shows up later -- through resentment, frustration, anger, and then bringing the walls up even higher to sort of overcompensate for the lack of boundaries -- in the end, it's actually an act of kindness to hold a boundary because of that generosity piece that I mentioned already.

HOW TO HOLD BOUNDARIES

Now, into the really really good stuff, *how do we actually do this?* Let's talk about how to hold boundaries. I know I did a fair amount of groundwork kind of setting this up so that you have this frame around the purpose and the benefits. But now, we're going to get into taking the action. If you start to doubt things or if you start to feel like this is really challenging, you can always come back to this lesson and remind yourself. A lot of times, when you come back and listen, if this just seems like a lot of theory and it doesn't make a lot of sense to you, it will later and you can always come back. Sometimes we have to kind of experience and practice for a little while then come back and listen again. And then we hear it in a whole new way based on the stuff that we've been practicing because now our vantage point has changed.

We're going to talk about external boundaries and internal boundaries, both kinds. We're going to start with the external boundaries or what we call the protective boundaries. There are actually six steps. I'll go into them in detail.

How to Hold External Boundaries:

1. Identify your line

This kind of boundary, just to be really clear in case you're wondering about the two types, this is about *how do I hold a boundary to protect myself from external transgressions* or from external encroachments, any kind of violations no matter how minor they might be. So, you're going to identify your line, where is your boundary, what is it exactly. We have to identify that first. That's not always immediately obvious.

2. Formulate the boundary declaration

Then the second thing is you're going to formulate through the boundary declaration. You're going to declare your boundary, but first you have to formulate, *what is the boundary?* Then put that into something that you can actually declare.

3. Rehearse the boundary declaration

Then you're going to rehearse the boundary declaration or the formulation of what your boundary is. It's not just like one of those internal boundaries for yourself I'm talking about. When you have to communicate something to people to your spouse and say, "this is something that I'm not going to be able to do," and you're setting that boundary, you're going to want to rehearse it. Especially if you're worried about their reaction or if you're afraid that you'll cave or if you're afraid that you'll get derailed, you want to rehearse it.

4. Start with the small things

Then you're going to start with the very small things. You'll have more than one thing that you're thinking you might want to try practicing boundaries around. There's going to be really really big things. There's going to be more minor things that are important but maybe not as loaded or as upsetting or as much of a hot button issue. You're going to start with those things so that you can learn the technique of this and the mechanics of this on something that is a little bit easier to manage emotionally.

5. Keep a mantra

Then you're going to keep a mantra, which is slightly different than a belief statement. I'll get into that. You have a mantra that's going to support you, that will keep you grounded in this work.

6. Establish supports

And then, you're going to establish supports. Now, of course, this group is going to be one of your supports, the Facebook group, the coaching group. But if you also have friends or family in your life that you know are going to back you, that have

your back on this, that are going to support you and help you when you're second guessing yourself or doubting, then you're going to want to establish those supports as well.

So, let's go through these one by one:

Identify Your Line

Number one, identifying your line and really knowing what the boundary is. If it only were that simple, right.

1. Recognize and honor your feelings

Sometimes, this gets tricky when we don't know our own feelings or that we don't honor our own feelings. The first thing you're going to do is recognize and honor your feelings. Tune inward, *what are your feelings telling you?* And I do have a fear and anger and sadness checklist for this lesson that you can use to tune into this. If you're struggling on this, if you're having a hard time really recognizing those things because it's really important to first be able to tune into yourself. There's going to be symptoms, emotional symptoms, that are going to come up for you, that are going to indicate boundary violations. When you get really familiar with those in your body, those are going to be big clues to you, like, *this is a sign that my boundaries are being crossed or that I'm letting my boundaries be crossed. I haven't clearly identified what's okay with me or what's not okay with me and so now I'm having some feelings about that. What are my feelings telling me?* First is to recognize them, not to judge them, not to dishonor them. You want to honor them because they're going to point you in the right direction. They're going to give you information and so you want to really learn to listen to them and not dismiss them. I really do believe that our emotions can be our internal guidance system. I'm not talking about acting out our adaptive child emotions. I'm not talking about acting on every emotion. I'm just talking about recognizing them and saying, "this is where I got triggered," "This is what this meant to me," "This is why I'm feeling this way," "This means that that's not okay." It's going to help you find that line.

2. Notice when you are trying to be something you are not

Another thing you can do to help with this is to notice when you're trying to be something that you're not. Like for example, if you're trying to act connected and nice when you don't feel connected and nice, I guess just the act of trying in and of itself is a sign that you're not that thing that you're trying to be or you wouldn't be trying to be that thing. So if you notice just that alone, like, *I'm trying, I'm striving, I'm reaching, I'm trying to act a certain way that I'm not or that I don't feel*, that's sometimes a way to arrive at how you're really feeling. Some people have an easier time with this than they do with step one. They have an easier time recognizing when they're faking it and then tune into, *okay, what's really going on? How do I really feel instead?* Then they do really just starting off with knowing their feelings right off the bat. Sometimes we have to have that contrasting experience. With a belief statement work, we have to be able to say what we don't want first before we can turn it into a positively stated thing. It's the same idea. If that works better for you, fantastic!

3. Release judgment of yourself

Then the third thing is you're going to want to really commit to releasing judgment of yourself in this process. You don't want to judge yourself for not feeling the way that you think you should feel or for feeling the way that you think you shouldn't feel. Or for having the boundary or for having the line. I guess this comes down to admitting where your personal lines are. Just getting real and admitting to yourself, *this is my personal line and I'm not going to judge it because it just is*. And if you just feel like something is too much for you, it just is. Even if it wasn't too much for someone else. For you, it is. It's really easy to second guess our boundaries. We compare ourselves to others. Especially, I feel like moms will think about how we should be and beat ourselves up and the mom guilt and all that thinking, *well, so and so down the street can do these things. She can only get two hours of sleep and still host this party or so and so doesn't mind taking on three projects outside their regular job duties, why can't I? Why is that too much for me?* I want you to let go of all of that. If you need to go back to some belief work to do that, that's fantastic. Do that because you want to be able to release any judgment of yourself for this to work. You're judging yourself, you're not going to be utilizing that information. You're going to be rejecting that information. You're not going to be assimilating that information. That's a denial of yourself. That's a rejection of your own boundaries. We can't expect anybody else to honor our boundaries if we're not honoring our own. This is the first step internally to be able to just say, "yeah, that's my boundary." Like, "that's just too much, I can't. I'm at the end and I cannot do any more." However that shows up, embrace it. Not just don't judge it, I want to challenge you even further to embrace it. Take it on as valuable information that you are going to cherish and treat with care and respect. And then, that is going to have a ripple out effect into your relationships.

Once you've done this, you might have to brainstorm. You might have to journal. You might have to look at the feelings checklist to kind of see what's happening for you. Then you're gonna go to formulating the boundary. Once you have looked at

your feelings and you see what they are telling you, *I guess that's really not okay with me*. Now you know that's not okay, what is okay, what is not okay, and you have a better understanding of that. Then we're going to move into formulating the boundary. And this is building on the feeling, what it tells you, and what you need as a result, and why that's important. I actually have a worksheet that you're going to be using that you can use. You can do this on your own, too. I'm going to go through the steps here real quick but it will be in the worksheet. You're going to really be taking notes here. Sort of almost like doing a brainstorm or a brain dump to capture certain relevant pieces of information in order that then you're going to use to put into a formula. It's going to go like this:

Formulate the boundary

1. Use the Boundary Declaration Formula

You're going to take the boundary declaration formula out.

2. What am I not ok with?

You're going to ask the question, *what am I not okay with?* Write it down in as many ways as you can. All the different ways that that is true about this particular thing. For your purposes right now, in this program, you don't have to just stick with one thing. You might have several things where you're recognizing, there's a few things that are not okay with you, do it for all of them. Do them separately. Write them all down because we want to prioritize an order of like, big to small later on. You want to be able to choose the smallest ones. Really brainstorm all of them. Don't limit yourself to just one thing here.

3. What do I want instead?

And then, ask yourself once you have the clarity around what's not okay, you're gonna ask yourself, what do I want instead of that for each of those things.

4. Why is this important to me?

And then, you're gonna ask, *why is this important to me?* Just brainstorm, *why is this important to me?* It is because it's something that I didn't get as a child and I feel like it's important for me to have this now because it's a life dream. It's particularly triggering because of an unmet need from childhood. It's important to me because it's connected to my values as a mother or a father or what I really want for our family culture. Why is it important to you? Just think big on this. Think in terms of your history. Think in terms of your future what's at stake for you.

5. What CAN I do?

What can I do about this? What can I do about this thing that I'm not okay with what's happening? Like, can I make a request? Can I make a different choice? Can I speak different words? Can I step out of the situation at a certain time? Can I plan better? Can I take care of myself better? What are the things you can do?

6. What must I surrender?

Then *what are the things I can't do*, which essentially means, *what must I surrender?* What are the things that you are not in control of that you have to surrender in this? Usually that's going to have to do with the past and it's going to have to do with other people's actions. But just get really specific and write those down.

7. What will I do (or stop doing) to hold my line?

Then you're going to ask, *what will I do or stop doing to hold my line? What will I do?* You've already written down what can I do, but you might not choose to do all of the things that you could do. You might just choose one or two of those. *What will I do or what will I stop doing to hold this boundary for myself? so that I can make sure that I'm not experiencing what I'm not okay with anymore and taking that control back.*

That's essentially it in a nutshell. You'll go through that on your own. Then, you can of course share that in the group if you want to or get support around it if you have questions, let me know. Then once you've done that and you filled that out, because you're going to be actually plugging in your answers into an actual statement of what you're going to say in that declaration, you're going to take what you wrote, pick the highlights and fill in the blanks. So, I've made it really easy. Now, of course, you can modify it. If you want to. I was just trying to think how I could make this as simple as possible because it can feel like there's gray area here and people get confused. Once you filled it out, you filled in the blanks, you have your boundary declaration, now you're going to actually move into rehearsing the boundary.

Rehearse the boundary

By now, if you know me, you know that I'm a fan of preparation. You know that I advocate rehearsing things and I, in no way, think that that makes things less authentic. The reason I say that is because by rehearsing, what you're making authentic is your functional adult. If you don't rehearse, you're going to be authentic from the place of your adaptive child. You don't really want to do that. You want to use your second consciousness or the new story that you're creating, the new way of thinking and being the empowered adult way of being per your relationship vision, if you go back and look at that. You want that to be what's coming through authentically. A hundred percent. You simply must rehearse if you have any anxiety in any way about holding this boundary. If you don't rehearse, then what's going to end up happening is the default will take over. You might soften it. You might chicken out. You might qualify. You might give up on it all together. Or if the other person says something triggering in the midst of it, then you might really react and get angry. You want to have this prepared. And really kind of internalize the mechanics of it.

- Say only what is necessary

Then only say what you need. Don't point out what they're doing wrong. Think in terms of less is more. *What is the only thing I need to say? Go back at your boundary declaration and go, is this really long? Like, is there anything that's repetitive in here? Is there anything where it's not necessary and it's inflammatory? Or in any way not serving the purpose of being really clear and concise and rather neutral.* I think of this as a neutral declaration. When I say don't point out what they're doing wrong, instead of saying something like, "I had a friend the other day who was holding a boundary with someone." She wanted to say like, "hey, you know your call intruded on my time with my friend." That was kind of pointing out what that person had done wrong instead of saying in a boundary way, "hey, listen, if I'm with a friend, I may not answer your call." That's just a very small example. It's not a full declaration but it's like an example of how you can say only what is necessary in a way where you're stating what you want and not kind of pointing out what they're doing wrong.

- Be firm and loving at the same time

Then you also want to be very firm and loving at the same time. Assume that they're doing the best they can. Assume that they're going to receive it well even if they don't, it doesn't matter. But when you come in with that energy of positive expectation and firmness, you have a loving energy but you also have a sort of non-negotiable energy about you. You can do belief work on this.

- Say why it matters to you, positively stated

Then you're gonna also make sure to say why it matters to you positively stated. *It's important to me that I have time to nourish myself and rejuvenate so that I can be more present to you and to the family later.* It's not so much just that you're saying what you're going to do or not going to do but why. *Why does it matter? What's at stake to you?* The reason why that is important is because it's just healthy communication to be willing to be transparent about where you're coming from and what your vantage point is. Your spouse will get to see you more clearly about what's at stake. It helps you remember that you have your own reasons even if they don't understand it and even if they would disagree with you. If they have different set of values, you just need to be clear on why it matters to you and what you hold to be important and to stand firm in that.

- Declare it... Don't debate or defend

Then you're going to declare it. Just don't debate. Don't defend. Don't get derailed. You simply, once you've rehearsed it, you declare it. Then if it starts to become a debate, then you can just hold that line and say, "hey, listen, I just am telling you, I'm not here to defend or debate. I don't want to argue with you. I'm not trying to fight with you. I just wanted to let you know." Then you can just be a broken record on that if they don't like it. Sometimes, people don't like it. People might not like a new boundary. That does not determine the success of our boundary or not. It doesn't determine the value or the relevance of it. This is really thinking inside-out as opposed to outside-in and not letting that get in the way.

Practice on small things first

Now the other thing I mentioned before was that you want to practice on small things first.

- Choose something that is lower stakes.

Once you did your brainstorm on all the things that you're not okay with, things that you do think you need to set some boundaries on for yourself, whether it's your time or your energy or a certain kind of communication, try to pick something that is lower stakes. You might want to look in your journal for this as well. If you've been writing some things down over the

weeks that will pop out at you, where you recognize, *oh, here's where I'm feeling, like this was bothering me*. It's not something that's super triggering. That's where you really want to start. The reason why I think I mentioned is just because when you're learning the mechanics of it and you're trying to internalize it into your muscle memory and make it a new habit and to be really authentic with it, you don't also then on top of that need the extra work of having to navigate the emotions around it or the fear of your spouse's emotions around it. You want to learn the mechanics of it when the emotions are not heightened so that then once that's internalized, you're much stronger to be able to handle it when the emotions are heightened.

- Be proactive about it.

The other thing you want to do is when you're going to come forward with informing your spouse of a boundary is you want to be very proactive about it. You might not feel like it's urgent especially if you picked a small thing. But the reason why it's important to be proactive is because that's going to prevent it from becoming urgent or becoming loaded. Therefore it's more likely to succeed. It's still small and when you're proactive, you're also not in the emotional charge of it. If you wait until an emotional charge of something happens that reminds you, like, *oh, I need to set this boundary because this just happened again and now I have feelings about it*. That's more reactive. Now you can still do that but for the purposes of practicing this, I do recommend picking something and being proactive and bringing it up before you feel triggered by it.

- Go through the steps to learn how it feels.

Then once you've chosen it and you have everything prepared, you're going to go through the steps to learn how it feels as you're rehearsing it obviously. This is part of the rehearsal. But I want you to go through the steps not just in the rehearsal of the communication of it but through the steps of identifying your emotions about it and answering those questions in the worksheet.

- This builds “muscle-memory” of the psyche.

That's important because that's what's going to help you build that muscle-memory of the psyche. That's where it becomes automatic. You can just do it really easily without having to think about it, *wait, what am I supposed to do?* And reaching for it. It's right there. It's available to you because you've practiced it. I mean, you could do one a day, if you wanted to on a small thing. Especially if you're doing this program with your spouse. It could be something really small, something that you even laugh about together just so that you can practice it.

Choose a Mantra

Then you want to choose a mantra. This is just to kind of help you get grounded especially if it's anxiety producing. Especially if you feel as though the connection will be compromised. If you are scared, if you feel like your safety is at stake, if there's core beliefs that are working against you. I'm going to give you some examples and there are some in a PDF that you can look at to kind of get some ideas and make them your own. You can use belief statements that you have in your journal already that will help you.

A mantra is just a belief statement, it's just not as refined as a belief statement. A mantra is a looser version of a belief statement. It doesn't have to be perfectly present tense and positively stated. It's just whatever makes you feel strong.

- What do you need to believe?

It's whatever makes you feel the way that you need to feel to pull this off, to feel confident about it. *What do you need to remind yourself of?* Like for example, a mantra could be, *I have the right to take care of myself or other people's problems are not my problems. Not my circus, not my monkeys*. Like whatever it is, whatever helps you feel like you're going to hold your boundary, that can become your mantra. It can be a funny phrase or it can be a belief statement.

- You can use an existing belief statement.

- Say it to yourself before you communicate your boundary and when you are enforcing it.

Not just when you communicate it but also when you're enforcing it. Anticipate, create a plan for yourself for when you think you're going to probably have to enforce it. If you know your spouse and you know that that's going to be challenging, you're going to be able to anticipate that there's going to be time so you're going to be ready. You might even want to print it on a note card or have it ready or something put it, tape it to your computer screen.

Some examples I have here, I'm going to give you a couple more:

- *It is safe for me to have limits.*
- *I have a right to say no to others if it's an invasion of my space or a violation of my rights.*
- *I allow others to have their feelings about my boundaries.*
- *As an adult, I have the right to choose what I participate in and what I don't at any time.*
- *Others are free to choose their course of action as well.*

Anything like that. Have a look at that and pick a mantra.

Get Support

- Be around people who support your lines.

Then get support. You want to be around people that are really going to support you in this process. And if that means spending less time with friends, friends that are more of those challenging kind of friends. Friends that like to be devil's advocate or that like to look at all sides of it or that really like to challenge you or debate something to help you get clear through opposition. We all have friends like that or that really want to feel like they want to engage it on an intellectual level but you're just feeling fragile around that. Just spend less time with those people right now. That doesn't mean they can't be your friends later but right now, you really want to hang around those people that have your back. They're gonna be like, *trust yourself. Yes, it's okay for you to say no. Or yes that seems like the right thing to do. I'm here for you.* Or a friend that you know you can call if you're struggling with your own feelings around it or if it didn't go well.

- Use the Facebook group.

And of course, our group. I want you to come to the Facebook group and post if something's challenging. If it didn't go well and you're trying to figure out what went wrong or you just need a pep talk or some encouragement or something like that, this is the group for that. So I really do hope you will take advantage of that.

- Have a plan to talk to somebody before and after you communicate a new boundary.

When you get to the more hot button, high stakes boundary things that you're going to be communicating, after you formulated them, have a plan to talk to that person beforehand and afterwards. Just have that plan so you know, *I'm going to communicate this and then I have something to do. I have a place to go for support immediately afterwards*, so that you can hold that further boundary on yourself of not getting derailed, not getting pulled into debating or defending or arguing. Sometimes having a support set up is you know afterwards will help you hold that boundary, too.

Here's an example. I want to give you some examples because I've been speaking sort of theoretically even though we're moving into the how. An example of setting a boundary in a positive way, like using the formulation would be: "I can't accept you yelling at me. If you keep shouting, I will leave the room and stop engaging until things are calm." That's stating what's not okay and what you're gonna do to hold that line for yourself. It's not accusational. It's just very neutral and it's informative. It's saying only what's necessary. It's very clear.

Another example would be: "I need an answer so we can work together because that's important to me. If you keep turning the tables, I will take that as a 'no' and plan accordingly." Those kinds of conversations where you are trying to get a piece of information and move forward but it's getting turned back on you. They're not giving you a clear answer so you can't move forward. If it's a yes-no question and they're not answering you, then you can just say, "I'll take no answer as a no and I'll plan accordingly," and then you have to follow through. That's another example. It's taking the power back but it's not controlling. You're not controlling the other person.

Another example would be: "I'm not comfortable with using our joint account for these kinds of expenses because we agreed to save for a vacation and that is my priority. If we can't agree on a solution that works for both of us, I will get a separate account and put x% of my paycheck in there." Now you're saying what you're going to do as a way of honoring your own boundary. Obviously, your first choice is that you want to find a solution that works for both of you. This would maybe be something that you would say to somebody after you had already tried that. After you had said, "I'm not comfortable with this, let's talk to each other first before we make these decisions." Let's say you've requested it several times and it's just not happening, then you move forward with actually drawing the line instead of just constantly requesting. Making a request is a way to hold a boundary but it's not the end-all, if they're not actually going to honor the request, then you have to. This is you honoring your request

after they haven't, as an example.

So here's another example, a parenting example: "I want to be a unified front with you, that is important to me. However, I will not be able to support your parenting if you call names because it violates my family values. If you do call names, please know I will walk away, or I will support our kids setting a safe boundary." This is an example that came from a couple that I worked with. He really wanted her support on parenting. He didn't feel supported by her and she really wanted to support him. She did on a lot of things but she just wasn't able to be a unified front. She realized in the end, it's because she had this boundary like that really wasn't okay with her but she felt like she was trying to be unified with him at all times. Then she realized, *I actually do have a line. I can be unified in these situations but I cannot be unified in these situations. And setting the expectation, I cannot be unified with you in those situations. Here's what I will do, please know that.* This is actually a real example. This was something that she did set and it worked. It really worked. They were able to find something that did work for both of them, where he felt respected. He got to implement the things that mattered to him and she felt like her family values were being upheld at the same time.

And then, here's another example, this is for someone who is chronically late: "I would love to eat with you, but I will only hold dinner for 20 minutes because I value my time and have other things I need to get to. If I haven't heard back from you, I will put the food on a plate in the fridge after 20 minutes." If I haven't heard from you, this is what I'm gonna do. There's been a history of chronic lateness and waiting around and waiting around. Instead of getting resentful, this is an example of how you can just take control and say, "okay, I know that we want to eat together but this is the boundary that I have to hold for myself." This is where the leverage comes in. So if he really wants to eat with this person or she really wants to eat with him, depending on who this person is, (this was actually a fabricated example that was kind of an amalgamation of many different clients I've worked with over the years) the person who this is being spoken to, if they really want to eat together, the leverage is, *I have 20 minutes or I'm going to have to call. I will call.* And so that's where they can change because they realize the line is going to be drawn. It's not just going to be *my spouse is going to do it but then they're going to be mad at me but they're going to do it anyway.* It's that, *oh, they won't they won't be mad at me, like, we're not going to be arguing about it but then I just won't get that. So I have to make an adjustment in order to have that from a place of recognizing their own desire for that.* That's what I meant when I said earlier, when you use strong boundaries or you communicate and enforce boundaries, your spouse will get in touch with what matters to them and start behaving according to what matters to them rather than you doing that for them. Rather than you doing that work for them, in making it perfectly smooth and consequence free in their choices.

For Psychological Boundaries

This is for protection against the narratives or perceptions that other people hold about you. This is when you feel like people's negativity around you is affecting you. If people are thinking something about you or they're judging you or they have made accusations against you that you feel hurt by, and now you can kind of tell that that's where their head is at. Or they're feeling really negative and they want you to fix it for them and you're trying to stay in your lane, that's what these psychological boundaries are for. They're psychological boundaries but they're still external boundaries because they are designed to protect you from the outside. Like I said, for narratives or perceptions of another that they hold against you and if you feel easily hurt by like that they would even think that about me, this is going to help you a lot.

1. First listen and ask for clarification

First, especially if you're in a dialogue with someone, you want to listen and ask for clarification so that you don't jump to conclusions. If you think you know for sure what someone is thinking or if you think you know for sure what somebody is expecting from you and you're pretty sure of that from the old story, you definitely want to pause and listen and ask for clarification because you never know. You could be looking at things through the old lenses. It might be that it's not true. So first you want to rule that out.

2. Let in only what is true for you. Keep out of the rest.

Then you want to hear what they're saying and let in only what is true for you. Let's say they start to tell you, "yeah, I do think this about you," "I do have this story of the situation," or "I do believe that this is what you're doing and I do believe that this is what kind of person that you are." You have the choice of saying, "some of that I just don't abide by. I don't agree with it and I don't accept it." So you can take in what is true for you. I guess the purpose of this is really emotional protection so that they're not ruminating, you're not internalizing, you're not engaging the subtext of something that hasn't even been spoken. You want to really be able to say, "is this true for me? If I really look inward and I ask myself honestly and I'm somebody who will tell myself the truth because I am in this program. I know that I can reflect it on myself and get honest with myself. I can

own my part so I am going to look and I'm going to say, is what they're saying true about me, does this seem true to me?" Remember that you're the judge of that. There is no place for objective reality in a marriage. You're just gonna let in what you think is possibly true and not the rest. You can say to yourself like, "you know what? That perception is about them not me. That perception is about the past not now."

Remember that a lot of times, especially if your spouse is projecting onto you, that they're inaccurate images of you. They are just projections. They're just a narrative and they're not about you. It might be that your spouse has to make meaning that way because that helps them feel defended against something that they don't want to see. Perhaps that's just the only way they can make meaning out of how they're feeling right now. But you do not have to take that on. You don't have to get upset. You can just say to yourself or out loud, "I actually don't accept that." The reason that this is key is that if you don't learn how to do this, the only way that you can ever feel okay is to stop the trigger of the distress, the psychological distress which would involve controlling other people or other things that we can't actually control. If we could, we would. We would have done it by now if we could. That leaves the losing strategies of control or withdrawal. That's all that's left, is you either withdraw or you try to control. If you're trying to stop the triggers. If you're trying to stop the thoughts of the other person or the comments of the other person or the perceptions of the other person or the negative energy of the other person, as long as you're trying to control that, you're not actually utilizing the power that you have. What I think is really helpful in this is what's called the "psychological bubble exercise." That's posted in the files. That's something that's going to be part of the lessons. It's basically a visualization where it guides you through in envisioning you where your boundary, like your energetic boundary ends, there's a sort of bubble around you. Everything between the bubble and you, the inside of the bubble and you, that's your biosphere. That's your space. That's your air and you can create that environment. You can decide what comes into that environment and what doesn't. So whatever's happening on the outside of that bubble, you can let just kind of ricochet off the bubble. You can declare it with your words as a way of reinforcing that but visualizing that can be really helpful. So check that out. That's a really cool exercise. If you find yourself ruminating. Especially if you're doing this program and you feel like your spouse is thinking, *I don't know if my spouse can change or she's never going to change or he's never going to change or that's how they always are*, and you're over here trying your darndest to create a new narrative and do your belief work, you have to remember it's already not true. Like it's the stuff that they're saying is already no longer true and you get to decide that. Having that power within yourself is it's really hard to teach. It's really something that you experience much like meditation in being able to practice that. I highly recommend it if you're somebody who tends to ruminate and overthink things and stay stuck on something that was said about you even when you know for sure that it's actually not true.

How to Hold CONTAINING BOUNDARIES

Now we're really moving into in the internal boundaries, which are the containing boundaries. To remind you again, these are the kind of boundaries that protect other people from what's inside of you. You might think this doesn't apply to you. I think some people have to work on external boundaries more than they have to work on internal boundaries and some people really have to work more on internal boundaries than they do external boundaries. I did, I had to work a lot harder on my internal boundaries than I did my external boundaries. Although both really were very important. Both are going to be important to you, too, like I said at the very beginning, both are valuable and you need healthy ones for both categories.

These are important if you have a history of:

1. Righteous Rage

But these are particularly important to you if you have a history of righteous rage, where you've gotten really mad. You're at risk of offending or hurting your spouse from the victim position, where it's like *it doesn't even matter. I'm so mad and I have the right to be mad and because I have the right to be mad I'm really going to let it rip*. The righteous rage, if you've had it, you know who you are and you will resonate with that.

2. Unbridled self-expression

Also if you have a history of unbridled self-expressions. One of your losing strategies, when I mentioned the losing strategies in the previous lesson, if that's one of your losing strategies, you're definitely going to need to develop some of these containing boundaries.

3. Losing it even though it never helps

You also need these if you have that really strong urge to let loose but you know it won't help. You're going to lose it. You're often feeling like you're going to lose it. Sometimes you can hold it in, sometimes you can't. But it's really a crap shoot and

you just don't know. You don't feel confident in your ability to contain yourself. If you don't feel confident in your ability to contain yourself, then this is for you.

4. Saying things you regret when upset

5. Fighting as opposed to fleeing

If you tend to be a fighter as opposed to a freezer, if you're like a fighter, then containing boundaries are going to be helpful for you for when you get triggered.

Now, we're going to move into the 'how' to do this:

1. Review the list of boundary violations

First you're going to review the list of boundary violations. That's in the materials for the exercises. You're going to circle the ones that you're guilty of. There's a bunch of different ones in there. Don't worry about it. Don't judge yourself. Most of us are going to be able to circle some things on some boundary violations here. Even if it makes you feel shame, I don't want you to avoid it. I want you to just face it and try to just shine the light on it because shame cannot live in the light. Once you shine the light on it, it will dissipate. There is such a thing as healthy shame that will help you recognize, *okay, I have to stop this. I have to find another way.* It will really help you connect to the value and the importance and your stake in it, not just your spouse's stake in it, to being able to change how you communicate these things and to hold these internal boundaries.

2. Sign the Personal Internal Boundaries Commitment

Once you've had a look at the list of boundary violations and you circle the ones that you're guilty of, then you're going to sign the personal internal boundaries commitment. This seems like a lot of assignments for one lesson, I just want to say, but it isn't that hard. There's not some of them are really short. It's not going to take you that much time. I think it's very important to sign this as a commitment to yourself. Hold yourself accountable. Put it in writing and declare it. You can declare this to your spouse as well. After you've done that, and there's a bunch of things on there, and you can add things to it. You can modify it as you see fit. But I definitely want you to sign that commitment for yourself. If this is something that you've struggled with and you had a bunch of things that you could sign on that list of boundary violations.

3. Visualize your containing boundary

A lot of minor things are boundary violations. There's a lot of things that we don't think of as boundary violations that actually are. Even knowing what the little ones are and the subtle ones are going to help you really visualize that bubble between you and others. Then you're going to visualize your containing boundary, which is what I had already talked about a little bit with a psychological boundary bubble exercise. This is the same thing. It's essentially the same thing. The purpose is just a little bit different here. Here what you're going to be doing is you're going to be getting familiar with that space between you and the inside of that internal boundary or that bubble to tap into. Not just the control over like what you let into it but what you don't let out of it and what you keep in it. So real quick, it's like if you're right-handed, you'd put your right hand flat just like a few inches in front of your stomach palm facing towards you. A few inches from your skin. You're kind of holding your hand there like imagining the containing part of your psychological boundary. You're pushing in with your right hand as if you're compressing air. Then as you press in with your hand, you're imagining the air pressure as you press. Then pull the muscles of your gut in as you push inward. You feel the strength of this containing force against you.

Sort of like an air girdle, is how Terry Real calls it, an air girdle. This is the feeling of you reigning you in, of you containing your thoughts, your feelings and your emotions and impulses. You can still express them later. It's not the same thing as repressing. It might feel that way in the moment but every time you feel moved to blurt something out or act out, this is the force that's going to stop you. As you imagine this throughout the day and you start using this to stop an action or a word when you feel tempted to do that, that's going to get stronger. You're going to want to strengthen the inside of that boundary. Commit to reigning yourself in. Commit to not offending another person from the victim position of hurting them because you feel like it's justified. Never justified. That's one of the things my husband and I had to really decide at some point when we were doing this work was we have to decide that we're never justified in saying certain things. No matter how justified we feel. There's just certain lines we will not cross. We are never justified. You kind of remove that permission that you might have given yourself before. This is so healthy to be able to do. It's really putting yourself in integrity with what your values truly are. If you're giving yourself that justification, to behave in ways that are below the line or crossing boundaries, then you really don't have a leg to stand on and asking your spouse to do the same thing for you. We have to be in alignment with what we're asking for. We have to be what we want from others. We have to be what we're asking for. Sometimes we want them to do it first, that's so

common. It's like, *I can do that when you give that to me*. This is the inside out approach, that's what this program is. This is very very important for you to commit to doing this for yourself from a place of strength, not from a place of admonishment. But from a place of empowerment and integrity and commitment to your values. There's other things you can do to come down from the heightened emotion and hold things in. One of the things you can do is use your journal obviously when you feel reactive. Write some things down and then ask yourself the question, *is there anything to this? What's really going on here? Am I up against a caricature? Am I up against the old story? Am I making this bigger than it really is because it gives me a sense of validation? Because it gives me the righteousness? Because I have felt victimized?* Once you get really honest with yourself about that, it's easy to let that go. Really is. Then you're just going to do the belief work. That's going to help you to not respond in those reactive ways that you used to.

4. Internalize a belief to support you or select a mantra

Internalizing a belief to support you or selecting that mantra that I already talked about. Stuff might come up around this. You might have a lot of insights around this about, *I know I do that. I think this is why and it's connected to this belief that I have*. If that's the case, then you go back to the belief work. And internalize a new belief that's going to support you. What do you need to believe to know that you can do this and that you can honor this personal internal boundaries commitment that you are signing and that you're committing to.

So that's it! I'm just going to review the assignments for this lesson because there were a few things I mentioned. There's a lot in here. It's absolutely essential in this very final lesson for the first phase, which is self-awareness and looking inward. Getting clear on who you actually are and holding those lines internally and externally so that you can build on a very strong sense of self and that that self that you are defining and strengthening is in support of your vision. Bringing your full, whole, powerful self to the new story. That's what this is all about. Let me just kind of go through these. You're going to see the worksheets I mentioned in the file section of the Facebook group. They're also going to be in the members area when I'm all done with the revisions.

Protective/External Boundaries

- Anger fear sadness checklist
- Boundary Declaration Formula
- Sign your Personal Boundaries Bill of Rights
- Look at the Mantra samples/examples
- Bubble Exercise for psychological boundaries

Containing/Internal Boundaries

- Review Boundary Violations List
- Sign Your Personal Internal Boundaries Commitment
- Visualize your containing boundary

For the external boundaries, you're going to have the Anger fear sadness checklist that you can use to honor your emotions as a guide to kind of figure out where your lines are and identify your lines. You're going to do the boundary declaration for an external boundary. You're going to answer all those questions about something that has been bothering you, that's not okay with you, where you need to really formulate that for yourself. I didn't mention this before, there's actually personal boundaries bill of rights. That's just something you can read through and sign for yourself to know that you have the rights for these boundaries. This is especially for you if you feel that you're being selfish by holding a boundary or anything like that. You're also going to want to look at the mantra samples. There's a PDF of mantras that you can use for this work. You can also just use it for your ongoing belief work as well, if you choose. Then the bubble exercise for the psychological boundaries to protect yourself from the perceptions or the energy of others where it's not a direct violation of you, in terms of action, but more like energy and thoughts and perceptions and narratives.

For the containing internal boundaries, it's just reviewing the boundary violations list. Identifying what you do, signing your personal commitment to holding those internal boundaries and then do the visualizing exercise of that containing boundary. There is a sheet for this that I started creating, that's not in there now, but it will be.

Then let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and where you guys are finding success on this and where you're finding challenges. However i can support you, please don't hesitate to reach out. Good luck! Thanks for tuning in and i will see you inside the next lesson.