

Boundary Problems

Main Boundary Problems in Relationships:

1. *Too much distance* – there is not enough closeness in the relationship, whether it is emotionally or physically; some relationships require only emotional closeness (e.g. friendships) while others require physical closeness as well (e.g. parent-child and intimate relationships)
 - When there is too much physical or emotional distance in a parent-child relationship, the child does not get enough guidance, intimacy, support, and feedback to develop a sense of their emotional and physical selves. This is neglect. They may also develop fear from not feeling connected to the caregiver in power. Feeling connected to a caregiver (attachment) is one of the basic needs of children because they know they depend on their caregiver(s) to survive.
 - When there is too much distance in an intimate relationship, the connection required to fuel a healthy intimate relationship dwindles.
 - When one carries too much distance in general, even friendly gestures may feel intrusive. The person is likely isolated.
 - Too distant of boundaries can cause one to be disconnected from their emotions and have difficulty expressing their emotions and needs. This may cause one to invalidate the emotions of others as well.

2. *Enmeshment* – there is no room for individual uniqueness; the values, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts of one become that of the other; this means that one individual does not have room to develop as an individual and express his/her/their uniqueness
 - When enmeshment occurs between a parent and a child, the child does not develop their own identity or a sense of their own emotions, but rather takes on the identity and emotions of their parent.
 - When enmeshment occurs in an intimate relationship, generally one partner's identity is taken on by both partners. This sacrifices the value of the other partner's individual beliefs and identity.
 - When you are enmeshed with someone, you may perceive the other person's experiences as happening to you.

3. *Too close of boundaries* – there is oversharing in ways that are inappropriate for the relationship; one may also be hypersensitive and absorb every change in mood, behaviour, and body language from people around them
 - When a parent over shares with a child, they send the message that the child should be able to carry the parent. The child may grow up feeling too responsible or inadequate. The child may also feel that their needs are insignificant if the parent expects the child to attend to their needs, but doesn't attend to the needs of the child.

- They may also grow up feeling as if they are responsible for the feelings of others and have great difficulty saying no.
- When a parent demands to know all of a child’s secrets without allowing any privacy, the parent prevents independence and autonomy. The child may also grow up to overshare in other relationships or demand to know more than is appropriate of others.
 - When one is hypersensitive to their partner’s changes, they may take everything personally causing problems in the relationship. Further, they may take on responsibilities that aren’t theirs.
4. *Too rigid* – there is no room for new experiences, information, or ideas; if boundaries are too rigid, critical thinking and growth cannot occur; someone with too rigid of boundaries may be difficult to bond with.
5. *Too flexible* – boundaries are so flexible that one generally agrees with whoever is around; may have difficulty setting priorities and sticking to them; may be easily distracted by new demands; may easily become overwhelmed with the demands of life as a result and lack a clear sense of their own values, identity, opinions, etc.
- When a parent is too flexible in their boundaries the child may lack the sense of security that comes from consistency, clear limits, a predictable schedule, and discernable standards. This parent may also give their children too much power and be easily manipulated.

4 Categories of Boundary Problems:

	Can’t Say	Can’t Hear
NO	<i>The Compliant</i> Feels guilty and/or controlled by others; can’t set boundaries	<i>The Controller</i> Aggressively or manipulatively violates the boundaries of others
YES	<i>The Nonresponsive</i> Sets boundaries against hearing and tending to the needs of others	<i>The Avoidant</i> Sets boundaries against receiving the care of others

*Combined category: “*Controlling Nonresponsives* have a hard time looking past themselves. They believe that it is the responsibility of others to carry and work through their baggage for them. They gravitate (and sometimes seem to prey on) people who have unclear boundaries and that they sense will naturally and willingly take on too many responsibilities and other people’s baggage in the relationship and who won’t complain about it.