Where Are Your Boundaries?

How to both determine and voice your personal boundaries in relationships

April 06, 2016 ~ By domesticshelters.org

When was the last time you thought about your personal boundaries? They are the non-negotiable lines that our partner cannot cross in order for us to feel respected and safe in a relationship. Boundaries keep us intact, and we should know and express them no matter how new, or not new, a relationship is. Boundaries protect our personal goals, dreams, values, autonomy and self-worth. If you haven’t thought about where your own boundaries stand, there’s no better time than the present.

What Boundaries Look Like

◆ **Physical Boundaries:** Your body is your own; no one else’s. Think about the timeline that makes you feel comfortable for being physical in a relationship. How far do you want to go on the first date or at any stage of a relationship? Also, as LoveisRespect.org points out, “sex isn’t currency.” You should not feel pressured to exchange sex for dinner out at a restaurant or because your partner says he or she loves you. Your boundary for when you’re comfortable with sex should be firm and stated clearly if there’s any confusion.

  *Physical boundaries also extend to violent behavior. Most of us probably have a no tolerance policy when it comes to violence. But if your partner thinks a playful shove or aggressive bedroom behavior is no big deal, and it makes you uncomfortable, this is also where it’s important to speak up and lay clear what your boundaries are.*

◆ **Emotional Boundaries:** Just like your body, your emotions are yours. No one else can tell you what you should be feeling at any given moment. Your boundaries here may just be asserting that you feel a certain emotion, such as sadness or guilt or joy, and you don’t appreciate when someone else tries to dissuade you from that emotion.

  *Perhaps your boundary is emotional separation; in other words, you don’t want to be responsible for someone else’s happiness. Or, your boundary is when you’re comfortable expressing intimate emotions with your partner, such as saying “I love you,” or “I’m ready to be exclusive.”*

◆ **Material Boundaries:** Sure, you were taught to share your things as a child, but as an adult, when and how you share your material belongings is up to you. Do you feel comfortable lending your partner your car, your phone or money? If so, what are you conditions for doing so?

◆ **Spiritual Boundaries:** Think of how comfortable you are in sharing your faith-based beliefs with others and whether or not you’re open to sharing different beliefs that your partner may have. This is up to you.

◆ **Mental Boundaries:** Are your opinions or thoughts easily swayed by others? If so, you may have a hard time standing your ground, which means you should give some thought to your mental boundaries.

Creating Boundaries, Finding Your Voice

While we may know what are boundaries are in our minds, writing them down, saying them out loud and

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OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH!

SAFE Homes – Rape Crisis Coalition, Seventh Circuit Solicitor’s Office, Spartanburg County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, Spartanburg County Department of Social Services, Spartanburg County Sheriff’s Office, and Spartanburg Police Department invite you to attend.

THE 19TH ANNUAL SILENT WITNESS VIGIL
to recognize past and present domestic violence victims and survivors.
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2016
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Daniel Morgan Square
(Main Street)
Please show your support by bringing your children, family & friends.

SHRCC 2015 STATISTICS
Assisted 4,473 adults and 2,253 children traumatized by domestic violence and sheltered
304 adults and children
§ Assisted 366 victims of sexual assault
§ Provided 4,002 individual and 1,386 family therapy sessions for 623 people
§ Provided 180 therapy/support groups which were attended by 205 individuals
§ Accompanied 116 victims of sexual assault to the hospital
§ Assisted 408 victims with filing order of protection petitions and attended 2,883 hearings with domestic violence and sexual assault victims
§ We provided 463 education/prevention programs reaching 171,557 individuals
§ 681 volunteers contributed 24,021.75 hours this year

TAKE ACTION!
We are looking for YOU! That’s right...YOU!!
Look at the ways you could make a difference in your community:

24-Hour Crisis Line: Listen, Help, Refer
Clerical Duties: Answer Phones, Make Copies
Eductions: Community Health Fairs
Emergency Shelter: Groups, Babysitting
Legal Advocacy: File, Organize, Assist
Special Projects: Silent Witness Vigil, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Folding & Labeling Newsletters
Thrift Store: Sorting, Organizing, Pickups

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Jamie Hughes at 864.583.9803.
enforcing them in a relationship can often be a challenge.  

**But, why?**

Irene van der Zande, author of *Relationship Safety Skills*, says that internalized beliefs, such as “It’s not worth it,” “I have no right,” or, “It’s dangerous to say no,” can be one reason we talk ourselves out of setting personal boundaries. She also cites a longing to belong, wishing to be accepted or loved, a fear of rejection or growing up in a home where boundary-setting was not allowed, can also make us afraid to speak up. However, “Safe and strong relationships start from a foundation of understanding appropriate boundaries,” she writes. Therefore, taking time to create written boundaries and overcoming fears about speaking up are often vital to having a healthy, equal relationship.

**Examples of Boundaries**

So what exactly does a boundary look like? Think of them as simple concepts and phrases that describe your limits, tolerances and expectations, or a list that communicates who you are and what you want or require from your partner.

You may have some idea of your boundaries already. Whether you do or don’t, spending a few days thinking about them may bring new or refined boundaries to light. Creating and editing your list of boundaries will help solidify them in your mind, can be more clearly shared with a partner and can serve as an important reminder to you in the future.

To help you get started on creating your list of boundaries, we’ve created a few abbreviated examples below. But, don’t limit yourself. Creating your boundaries should be a uniquely personal endeavor driven by your needs, wants and specifics:

- I will have my own career and my partner will support it completely.
- I will have my own friends and you may or may not be part of that circle.
- I will spend time with my family because they mean the world to me.
- I am proud of my appearance and you will not try to change it.
- We will start our relationship slowly, unless I decide otherwise.
- I can change my mind for any reason and you will respect this freedom.
- If I say no, it means no; I can walk away from this relationship.
- I have my own schedule that must be satisfied within our partnership.
- I decide on what’s important to me.
- You will listen to me and respect my feelings/opinions.

**Assertive, Not Aggressive**

Van der Zande also says that the way in which we communicate our boundaries can impact how they are received. How often do you tell your kids to speak up, please, when they’re asking for something? You help them find their voice, so it’s time to find yours, as an adult.

If you’re telling someone in a barely audible whisper that you don’t like the way they speak to you, chances are, that boundary will simply float away. On the other hand, van der Zande points out that speaking or acting aggressively, such as using insulting language, leaning forward into someone’s face or using an irritated voice, will make our partner feel attacked and isn’t the most affective strategy either.
Instead, she advises to use assertive communication, which will tell the other person, “Of course you are going to care about what I want once you understand what it is. What I have to say is very important to me, and I believe that you are such a good person that this will be very important to you, too.”

Having an assertive attitude can look like some of the following, says the author:

- Body language that is calm, confident and aware.
- Eye contact.
- A facial expression that matches your message: a neutral face if you are telling someone to stop or a friendly face if you’re asking for something you need.
- A loud enough voice that can be easily heard (and nix the whining).
- Managing space. Move away from someone who you want to stop bothering you or move closer to someone if you want something from them.
Many researchers have concluded that some children who witness or are victims of domestic violence experience a profound and lasting impact on their lives and hopes for the future. “A child’s developing brain can mistakenly encode the violence,” says Children of Domestic Violence, adding that kids can grow up believing that violence is normal and that they are to blame for it. The statistics and studies below reinforce that belief, and that stopping domestic violence long-term and “breaking the cycle of violence” heavily relies on raising children in environments free of violence.


- **The single best predictor of children becoming either perpetrators or victims of domestic violence later in life is whether or not they grow up in a home where there is domestic violence.** Studies from various countries support the findings that rates of abuse are higher among women whose husbands were abused as children or who saw their mothers being abused. Source: “Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children.” UNICEF, Child Protection Section and The Body Shop International (2006).


- **Males exposed to domestic violence as children are more likely to engage in domestic violence as adults, and females are more likely to be victims as adults.** Source: Whitfield, C., Anda, R., Dube, S., and Felitti, V. (2003). “Violent childhood experiences and the risk of intimate partner violence as adults.” Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 18(12).

- **Children who were exposed to violence in the home are 15 times more likely to be physically and/or sexually assaulted than the national average.** Source: Volpe, J.S., “Effects of Domestic Violence on Children and Adolescents: An Overview”, The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, 1996.

- **Compared with children in other households, children who have been exposed to domestic violence often suffer from insomnia and have trouble with bed-wetting. They also are more likely to experience difficulties in school and to score lower on assessments of verbal, motor, and cognitive skills, and are more likely to exhibit aggressive and antisocial behavior, to be depressed and anxious, and to have slower cognitive development.** Source: Fantuzzo, J. and Mohr, W. (1999). “Prevalence and effects of child exposure to domestic violence.” The Future of Children, 9(3), 21-32.26. Schechter, S. and Edleson, J.L. (2000). Domestic violence and children: Creating a public response. Center on Crime, Communities and Culture for the Open Society Institute.

- **Court statistics show that children are present during domestic or intimate partner violence incidents in 36% of cases; of those children who were present, 60% directly witnessed the violence.** Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Female Victims of Violence,” Sept 2009.
Supporting Survivors with Disabilities: When Your Abusive Partner is Also Your Caregiver

By Marilyn, a Hotline advocate ~ July 12, 2016

Here at The Hotline, we know that abuse occurs in intimate partner relationships when one person tries to maintain power and control over their partner. When a person depends on their partner for any form of caretaking, there may be additional risk for abuse because of a power imbalance. People with disabilities often experience higher rates of domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse, and the impact of abuse may compound the disability.

When abusive partners are also caregivers, they may try to gain control in different ways:

- They might try to gain power of attorney or legal conservator. Sometimes abusive partners will try to take this role in order to control different disability benefits, such as social security disability insurance or supplemental security income.
- They might try to withhold medication or give out the wrong amount of medication.
- They might attempt to isolate their partner from friends, family or healthcare providers. For instance, the abusive partner may interpret for their partner or take control of assistive devices/talking computer.
- They might keep mobility or breathing devices out of reach.
- They may prevent their partner from speaking with a doctor in private.
- They might refuse to provide assistance with essential personal needs (bathing, toilet, eating, etc).
- They might be emotionally abusive about their partner's disability or health status by engaging in disability related shaming and humiliation.

If your partner is also your caregiver in any capacity, you deserve to be treated with respect and dignity at all times. You deserve to have self-determination over your care and to live a life free of abuse. If you or someone you care about is being abused by their partner and caregiver, there are steps you can take to seek support.

- Consider contacting Adult Protective Services. Adult Protective Services is a social services program that operates nationwide to serve seniors and adults with disabilities who are in need of assistance. Note for friends and family: a survivor always has the right to decline these services.
- Try to locate another caregiver to receive additional support. Since abuse often thrives in isolation, social support can be a vital part of safety planning. Consider reaching out to neighbors, friends and family who might be supportive.
- Some survivors are eligible for financial assistance that will make health insurance much more affordable. According to Futures Without Violence, as of April 29, 2015, survivors of domestic violence may apply for health insurance through healthcare.gov at any time. They do not need to wait for Open Enrollment. This new policy allows survivors of domestic violence to qualify for a Special Enrollment Period instead of the short window of time during Open Enrollment.
- Employers may provide resources and support to survivors with disabilities. For more information about how employers can support and promote inclusive policies for domestic violence survivors in the workplace, go to http://www.workplacesrespond.org/.
- Contact nearby shelters to ensure they are able to support survivors with disabilities (i.e. do they admit people with disabilities, provide reasonable accommodations, eliminate structural barriers to access, etc.).
10 Ways You Can Help Prevent Domestic Violence Where You Live

More than one-third of women and one in 12 men have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, according to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Anyone would agree that’s too many. If you’re asking yourself what you can do to help, read on. Below, 10 steps you can take to help stop domestic violence in your community.

1. Know the signs. Domestic violence can happen to anyone—white, black, young, old, rich, poor, educated, not educated. Sometimes violence begins early on in a relationship and other times it takes months or even years to appear. But there generally are some warning signs. Be wary of the following red flags an abuser may exhibit at any point in a relationship:
   - Being jealous of your friends or time spent away from your partner
   - Discouraging you from spending time away from your partner
   - Embarrassing or shaming you
   - Controlling all financial decisions
   - Making you feel guilty for all the problems in the relationship
   - Preventing you from working
   - Intentionally damaging your property
   - Threatening violence against you, your pets or someone you love to gain compliance
   - Pressuring you to have sex when you don’t want to
   - Intimidating you physically, especially with weapons

2. Don’t ignore it. Police officers hear the same thing from witnesses again and again—*I heard/saw/perceived domestic violence but didn’t want to get involved.* If you hear your neighbors engaged in a violent situation, call the police. It could save a life.

3. Lend an ear. If someone ever confides in you they are experiencing domestic violence, listen without judgment. Believe what they are telling you and ask how you can help, or see this list of 25 ways to help a survivor.

4. Be available. If someone you know is thinking about leaving or is in fear the violence will escalate, be ready to help. Keep your phone with you and the ringer on, make sure you have gas in your car and discuss an escape plan or meeting place ahead of time.

5. Know the number to a nearby shelter. You never know who might need refuge in a hurry. Keep numbers to shelters (find local shelter numbers here) and the National Domestic Violence Hotline in your phone (800-799-7233).

6. Check in regularly. If a loved one or friend is in danger, reach out regularly to ensure his or her safety.

7. Be a resource. Someone experiencing violence may not be able to research shelters, escape plans or set up necessities like bank accounts and cell phones while living with his or her abuser. Offer to do the legwork to help ease stress and keep things confidential. Here’s a list of items a survivor may need to take with them.

8. Write it down. Document every incident you witness and include the date, time, location, injuries and circumstances. This information could be very useful in later police reports and court cases, both criminal and civil.

9. Get the word out. Assist a local shelter or domestic violence organization in their efforts to raise awareness in your community. Or use your personal connections to start a grassroots campaign. Organize talks at your workplace wellness fair, HOA meetings and church groups.

10. Put your money where your mouth is. Use your power as a consumer and refuse to support the culture perpetuated in music, movies, television, games and the media that glorifies violence, particularly against women.
SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition (SHRCC) provides services to victims of domestic violence in Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union Counties and victims of sexual assault in Spartanburg and Cherokee Counties.

SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition Mission

Our mission is to use our collective voice to address the impact of domestic and sexual violence by providing quality services to those affected and to create social change through education, training, and activism.

VISION:
We envision a community liberated from all forms of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Frontlines archives can be viewed on our website @ www.shrcc.org as Newsletter Archive under Resources heading