

# Developing Boundaries in Marriage

What is our goal for marriage or, in fact, life itself?

For a healthy relationship to exist, we need to foster two basic developmental tasks:

**SEPARATE FROM OTHERS**

**BOND (ATTACH) TO OTHERS**

In a perfect world, these two things would happen naturally as you move to adulthood. However, in a fallen world, we have a tendency to become either too bonded or too separate.

What is being too bonded called?

What does being too separate feel like?

Counterintuitively, for intimacy to develop and grow, there must be boundaries.

## Boundaries=Responsibility

A property line. A realization of my own person apart from others; a sense of “self” or identity apart from others, where you begin and end where others begin and end.

Knowing what we own and what we don't own

**My responsibility ends with my property line.** If my neighbor has leaves, I cannot climb over the fence and start raking his leaves without his permission. My neighbor cannot climb my fence and start raking my leaves. If I want to enter into her property, I must ask permission. She can choose to say yes or no. I can choose to say yes or no. And I must respect her choice.

What am I responsible for? What is inside my property line?

- **Feelings** We are **responsible** for our own feelings. We are not **responsible** for the feelings of others.
- **Behavior** We are **responsible** for our behavior, what we do and what we don't do. Other people are **responsible** for their behavior. **WE HAVE A CHOICE.** People don't make us do things. We choose to do them, even though it may feel like we have been forced. If we feel **forced** or **compelled** to do something, we are not asserting our boundaries in a healthy way.
- **Choices** Every choice means you are saying **yes** to something and **no** to something else. We can choose to do something, or not to do something. **Whenever we give anything (money, time, energy, etc.) it needs to be because we choose to give it. Own your choices.**
- **Attitudes** Our mental positions or opinions toward something. They are within our hearts, not someone else's. God tells us to examine our attitudes and take responsibility for how they govern our lives. These are often secret and unconscious.

## What happens when you have an underdeveloped self or weak boundaries?

- You are vulnerable to being **controlled** or being **controlling**.
- You are chronically **indecisive** because you cannot choose what you want apart from others, because you feel responsible for their feelings.
- You have difficulty saying **no**. You often feel guilty for saying no, but you also feel bad for saying yes, because you don't want to do it.
- Blame game. Blamers are typically angry with what **OTHERS** should be doing rather than facing their **own** discomfort. They often feel **morally superior**. Brene Brown says, "Blame is simply the discharging of discomfort or pain. It has an inverse relationship with accountability."
- You view negative circumstances and relationships as out of your control.
- You rarely believe you are wrong.
- You answer for other people. You think apologizing is a sign of weakness.
- You have a critical or disapproving spirit
- You think people who say no to you are mean or unloving.
- You feel over-responsible to make others happy.

## Why would a controlling person have weak boundaries?

## Why would a pleaser have weak boundaries?

## Whose Problem is it?

**You cannot force others to change, you can only change yourself.**

Take responsibility for your own part. **Have you been controlling or overstepping your own yard? Have you been nagging, fussing, criticizing? Have you had outbursts of anger?**

**Have you been irresponsible or passive allowing others to barge into your yard?**

## Love and Limits

**Example:**

**Responsible for her thoughts and attitudes:.**

**Responsible for her actions:**

**Homework:** Youtube search: Friedman's Theory of Differentiated Leadership Made Simple

**Reference:** *Changes that Heal*, Dr. Henry Cloud  
*Boundaries in Marriage*, Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend