



# Boundaries

Me vs. Not Me

**Tracy Henderson**  
**Counseling**

## Why Boundaries Matter

Boundaries are essential tools for **defining who we are**, **preserving our well-being**, and **navigating relationships and environments**. They help us:

- Clarify what belongs to us emotionally, mentally, physically, and energetically.
- Protect our energy, time, identity, and personal values.
- Build healthier, more respectful connections.

Boundaries are often shaped by:

- Family of origin and personality
- Culture, religious, and gender norms
- Social and media influences
- Life experiences and relationships

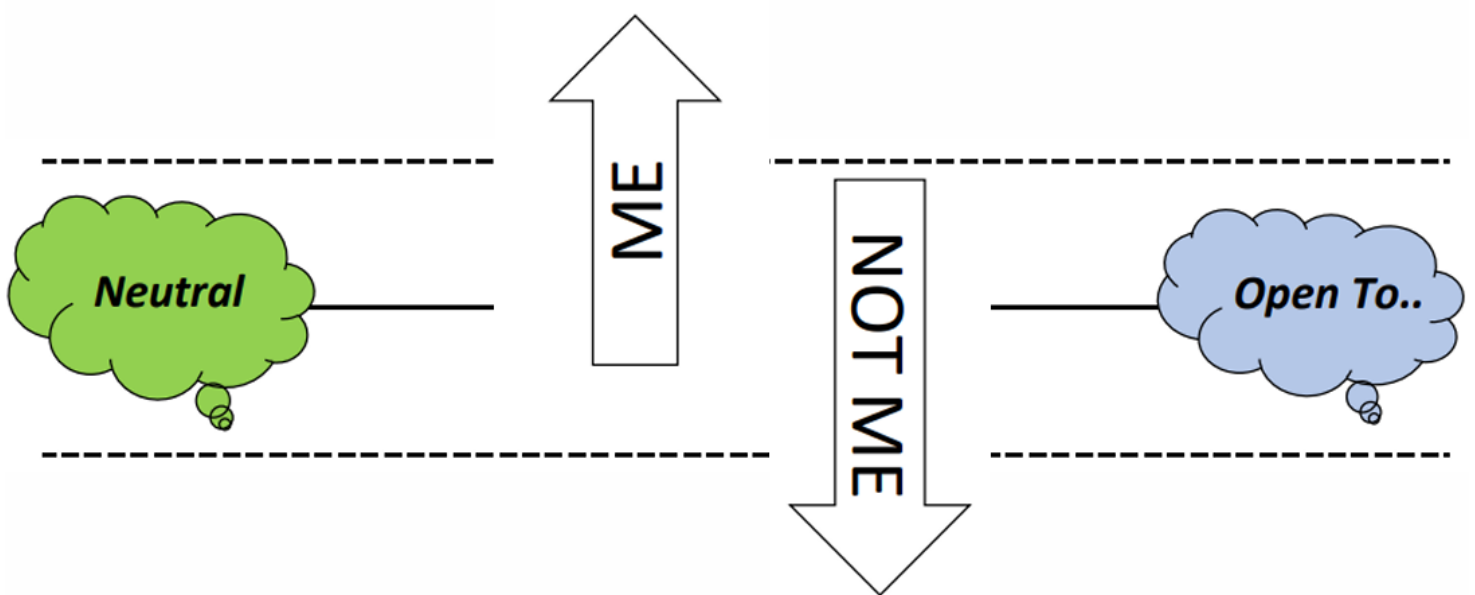
They can be **inherited**, **developed**, **imposed**, or even **violated**, which makes conscious reflection and communication vital for reclaiming and reinforcing them.

---

### Identify: What Is “Me” and What Is “Not Me”?

To create meaningful boundaries, start by asking:

- What is my responsibility and what is not?
- Where do I end and others begin?
- What do I need to feel safe, respected, and whole?



---

## Reflect:

When identifying where boundaries may be needed, consider these types:

- **Geographical | Proximity:** How physically close or far you prefer others to be.
- **Environmental | Sensory:** What are the places, contexts, or sounds that you resonate with.
- **Body | Touch:** What kind of touch feels safe, welcome, or intrusive.
- **Words | Tone:** What language or tone is acceptable/unacceptable to you.
- **Truth | Beliefs:** How your beliefs differ from others' and how much influence others have on your truth.
- **Time | Investment:** How you allocate your time and energy; your availability.
- **Emotional Surrogacy | Emotional Distance:** Taking on others' feelings or expecting others to manage yours.
- **People | Social:** Who you give access to and under what terms.
- **Family | Obligations:** Expectations based on roles, traditions, or dynamics.
- **Consequences:** What will happen if a boundary is crossed.

---

## Prompts: Identifying Boundaries

Do I need to set boundaries...

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| ○ My <b>feelings</b> ?             | ○ My <b>time and energy</b> ?              |
| ○ My <b>attitudes or beliefs</b> ? | ○ My <b>capacity or resources</b> ?        |
| ○ My <b>behaviors</b> ?            | ○ My <b>needs and desires</b> ?            |
| ○ My <b>choices</b> ?              | ○ My <b>love or emotional investment</b> ? |
| ○ My <b>values</b> ?               |  |

---

## Example: Boundaries in Action

*"My boss often emails me outside of working hours late at night, early mornings, and weekends. I feel anxious, guilty, and distracted when I receive these emails. It ruins my personal time, and I find it difficult to relax or focus."*

### Observation:

Your boundaries are being tested in several areas:

- **Time** → Your personal and professional life are blending in a harmful way.
- **Beliefs** → You value work-life balance and feel this is being disrespected.
- **Emotions** → The intrusion is creating anxiety, guilt, and emotional exhaustion.
- **Capacity** → You are emotionally overloaded and mentally strained.

### Action: Setting the Boundary

#### 1. Reflect and Clarify Your Boundary

- *"I believe work should stay within work hours to preserve my well-being and family life."*

#### 2. Communicate Clearly and Respectfully

- *"I wanted to let you know that I will not be checking emails outside of working hours. This helps me stay more focused and productive during the workday while being fully present in my personal life."*

#### 3. Hold and Reaffirm the Boundary

- Set an auto-response or email footer indicating email availability.
- Silence notifications or set "Do Not Disturb" times on devices.
- If emails are still sent after hours, choose not to respond until work hours resume.

#### 4. Self-Validate and Emotionally Detach from Guilt

- Remind yourself: *"Rest is productive. My time matters. I'm allowed to set this line."*
- Journal or talk through lingering feelings of guilt or fear of conflict.

---

## Strategies:

### Know Your Values

- Identify what matters most to you.
- Boundaries reflect your values in action.

### Practice Self-Awareness

- Tune into discomfort, resentment, or burnout these often signal violated boundaries.
- Notice when you're overextending or self-abandoning.

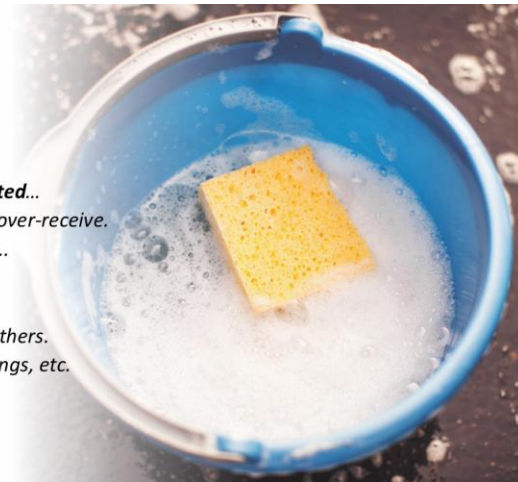


### Communicate Clearly

- Use direct, respectful language.
- Focus on your needs, not blaming others.
- Use assertive, "I" statements to express what's acceptable and what's not.
  - *"I need to..."* instead of *"You always..."*

### POROUS BOUNDARIES

- **Connect but NOT Protected...**
- Tendency to absorb and over-receive.
- Allow in what is not ours..
- Loss of self.
- Tendency to intrude on others.
- Over-give thoughts, feelings, etc.



### Start Small

- Practice boundary-setting in low-risk situations.
- Build confidence by asserting small preferences (e.g., "No thanks, I'm not available tonight.")

## Tolerate Discomfort

- Boundaries may make others uncomfortable that's okay.
- You can uphold a boundary *and* be kind.

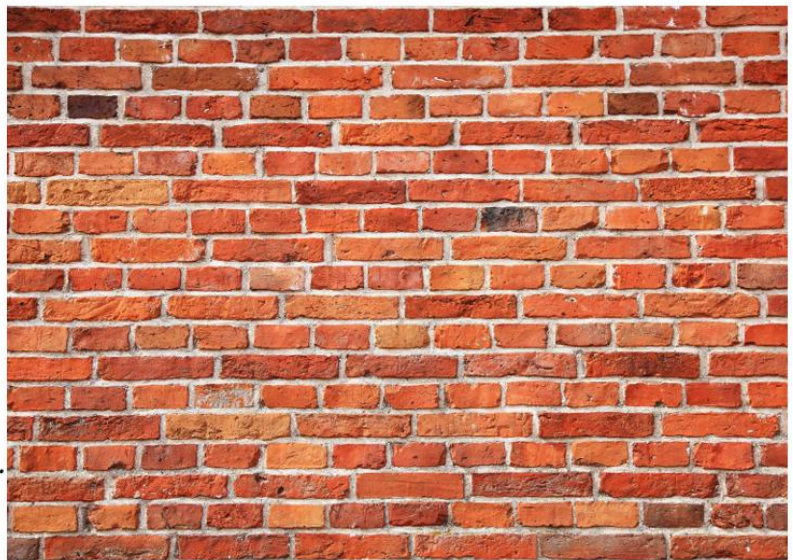
## Establish Consequences

- Clarify what you will do if a boundary is crossed.
  - *“If I continue receiving late-night emails, I will mute notifications permanently.”*

# RIGID BOUNDARIES

---

- ***Protected but NOT Connected...***
- *Tendency to Under-receive...*
- *Block the input and love of others...*
- *Tendency to restrain self...*
- *Withhold expressing/giving to others..*
- *Under-give thoughts, feelings, etc...*



## Prioritize Self-Care

- Boundaries are not walls; they're filters to protect your peace.
- Saying “no” to others often means saying “yes” to yourself.
- Make time for activities that support your well-being.

## Know Your Limits

- Reflect on your needs and areas of stress to identify where boundaries are needed.

## Be Consistent

- Enforce your boundaries firmly, even when challenged.

## **Set Priorities**

- Align your commitments with your values and learn to say no.

## **Establish Physical Boundaries**

- Protect your space, privacy, and belongings.

## **Create Emotional Boundaries**

- Set limits on emotionally draining interactions.

## **Manage Stimulation & Technology**

- Limit noise pollution, stimulation, and tech intrusion into personal time and relationships.

## **Be Assertive**

- Communicate boundaries with confidence and respect.

## **Seek Support**

- Rely on trusted people or professionals for guidance and encouragement.

## **Be Flexible**

- Adjust boundaries when necessary to suit changing situations.

## **Own Your Boundaries**

- Recognize that boundaries are a form of self-respect and self-care.

---

## **Reflect and Practice:**

- A situation where I feel a boundary is needed: \_\_\_\_\_
- What's being tested? (Time, emotions, beliefs?) \_\_\_\_\_
- What do I want to say or do? \_\_\_\_\_
- How will I stay grounded? \_\_\_\_\_