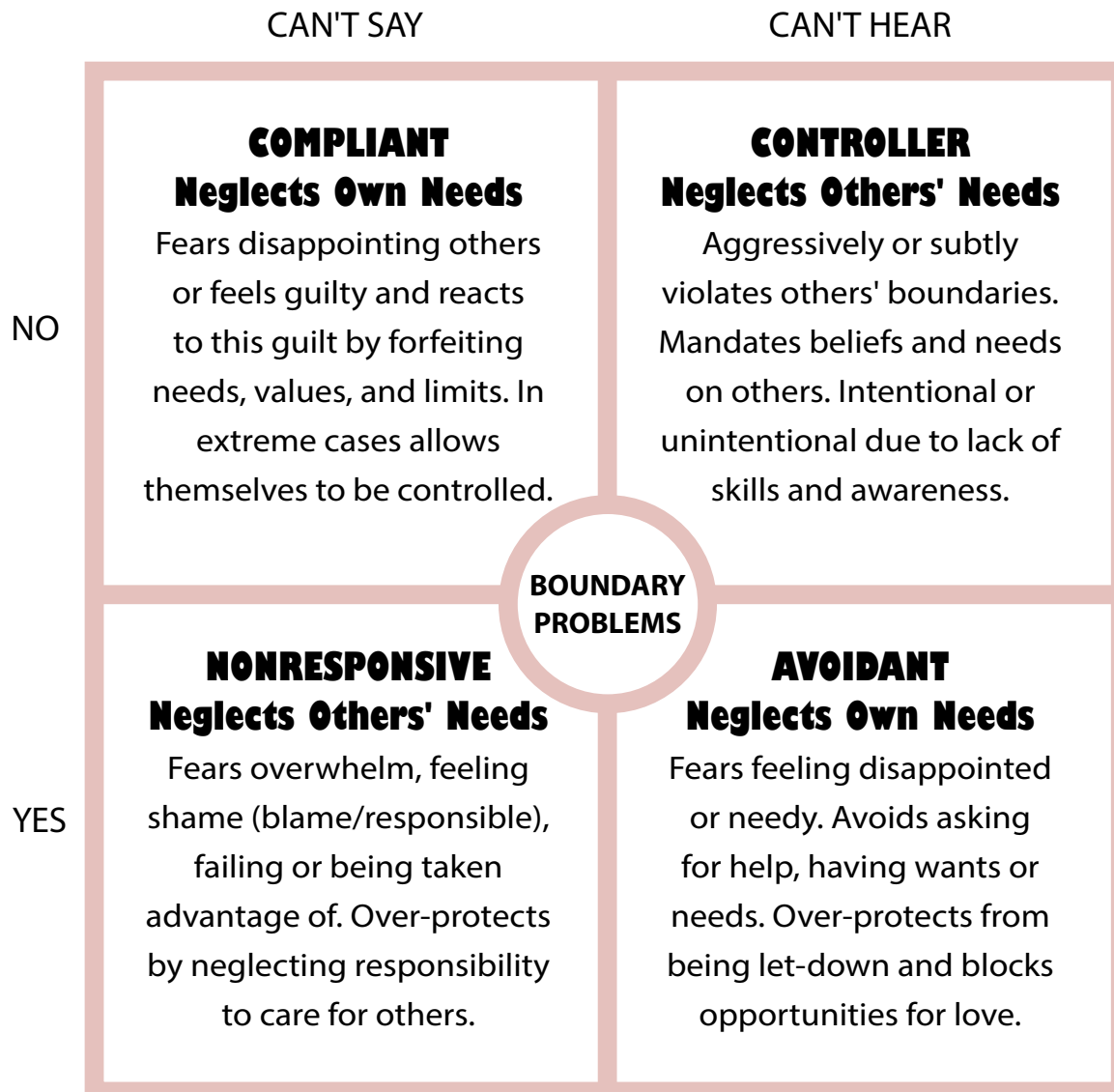


4 BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

Our loving heart, like our physical one, needs inflow and outflow. If we have boundary problems we are left feeling unloved and resentful. We won't feel the joy of caring or feeling cared for, robbing us from genuine connection (feeling valued and cared for).

Many people do not take ownership for how they resist LOVE. They have a lot of love around them but do not realize that their loneliness is a result of their own lack of responsiveness.

Henry Cloud, PhD





**Boundaries are a
function of self-respect
and self-love.**

Brene Brown, PhD

Compliant / Porous: Can't Say No

- Subtle or extreme people-pleasing, codependency, hypervigilant, anxious
- Melt to demands and needs of others, lose sense of self, has 'urge to merge'
- Chameleon, changing values, needs, likes and dislikes to accommodate others
- Fear others' anger, walks on eggshells, 'shrinks' own needs, subconsciously 'stuck' in compliance
- Fear of feeling guilt/shame for failing to help or make others feel better
- Controlled by an overstrict, critical conscience, 'Inner Critic' and self-condemnation

Describe an experience in which you wished you had said "No" or set a limit, but didn't.

What maladaptive strategies have you used to **avoid** disappointing others (taking the blame, lying, putting-up with maltreatment, loyal to a fault, helping people that hurt you, not setting limits, etc.)?

As you were growing up, what did you learn about communicating your likes, dislikes, wants, needs, and about setting limits and saying 'No'? Were you allowed to ask for what you wanted?



**Walls keep everybody
out. Boundaries teach
them where the door is.**

Mark Groves

Avoidant / Rigid: Can't Hear Yes

- Avoids asking for help (triggers feelings of vulnerability, anxiety, shame or 'neediness')
- Rigid boundaries to avoid receiving (compliments, acts of service, gifts, comforting touch, etc.)
- Difficulty recognizing own needs and wants
- Withdraw and isolate when feeling needy, loath feeling like a burden
- Boundaries more like walls than fences

What value do you see in allowing others' to help you and care for you?

Is it difficult for you to ask for and receive help? Describe a time you asked a friend or family member for help. What was the result?

Growing up, what did you learn about asking for what you want and need, and asking for help?



**You are not required to
set yourself on fire to
keep others warm.**

Controller: Can't Hear No

- Feel automatic need to control others to avoid feeling helpless or powerless
- WE CAN ALL EXHIBIT SIGNS OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS AT TIMES
- Fear unpredictability of others' love so they attempt to control people in order to feel 'loved'
- Fear others' boundaries and independence will result in abandonment (all-or-nothing thinking)
- Subconscious deep belief that self-worth and lovability depends on others' compliance

In what relationships and situations have you been perceived as Controlling? Why was it important for you to have control? What did you fear would happen if you stopped controlling?

We are Controlling, even if unintentional, when we project responsibility and blame our feelings on others: 'You hurt me,' 'You make me feel unloved,' or 'When you do that, I feel jealous.' Describe a time someone made you responsible for their emotions? How did it feel? How did you respond?

It's our responsibility to identify and understand our emotions, so we may communicate our real wants, needs or limits. If we're feeling unloved, we may need to say, 'I want to do something fun tonight' or 'I'd love a hug right now!' Do you see how this is connecting, rather than controlling?

Nonresponsive: Can't Say Yes

- Loath own 'neediness' and projects this loathing onto others' needs and wants in relationship
- Low tolerance (and even critical) of others' needs, wants or expectations
- Programmed to be overly-absorbed in their own needs as if survival is dependent on it
- Sets rigid boundaries against the responsibility to love and care for others
- Fear feeling pressured, engulfed or overwhelmed by the needs of others
- Stems from childhood to adapt to a parent that over-shared, raged, overly expressed emotions, or made you responsible for their needs and feelings. To protect from enmeshment, children build a defensive wall. In adulthood, this walls off from fulfilling, connected relationships with reciprocity

Have you experienced a Nonresponsive, someone who 'barely shows up' in relationship? How did it feel? What did you hope for? What was missing?

Nonresponsive/Controller with Compliant Narcissistic Patterns

A Controller/Nonresponsive has a hard time looking past themselves (a form of narcissism).

- When a Compliant (giver/non-receiver) meets a Controller/Nonresponsive (taker/non-giver) they form the classic **Codependent Relationship** (both partners are codependent, as narcissistic behaviors can only continue to exist within the context of another's compliance).
- Compliant have few needs and over-give, but will eventually feel resentful and unloved
- This relationship CAN CHANGE! It takes one person in the relationship, usually the Compliant, to start communicating wants, needs and limits (boundaries) to dissolve the codependent/narcissistic dynamic, and provide opportunity for giving and receiving, loving and connecting
- The best way to **prevent** a Codependent/Narcissistic Relationship is ensuring you're in tune with your wants, needs and limits and communicating them in a clear, positive, forthright manner

Important Note: There is a small percentage of the population with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) who are incapable of the empathy required for an interdependent, healthy, loving, respectful, safe relationship. This is different than having 'narcissistic tendencies.' Narcissistic tendencies can be resolved with skills-building. However, NPD is a disorder that psychologists say is untreatable. An indicator of NPD is infidelity, shaming, criticizing, ignoring or stomping on loved-one's wants, needs and boundaries, even after they have been clearly communicated.

SOLVING BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

We thrive in relationships when we feel cherished and appreciated with a freedom to be ourselves. Where both people have room to express their needs and wants, and to have the support to meet those needs. This is possible when we're responsible for knowing and communicating our needs, wants and needed limits (boundaries).



Creating trusting, respecting relationships with loved-ones, friends and even coworkers

ENSURE WE TAKE 100% RESPONSIBILITY (POWER) TO

- Understand and process our own emotions and perceptions
- Know our own needs, wants and limits (boundaries)
- Communicate our own needs, wants and limits (boundaries)
- Ask others what they need to feel loved, respected, supported and cared for



ALLOW OTHERS TO HAVE 100% RESPONSIBILITY (POWER) TO

- Understand, process their emotions and perceptions without fixing or criticizing
- Know their own needs, wants and limits (boundaries)
- Communicate their own needs, wants and limits (boundaries) without making assumptions, 'rescuing' or criticizing them (Openhearted Listening and Respect at Face Value, even if you think their words are misguided)

MAKING BOUNDARY PROBLEMS

Unspoken expectations
are premeditated
resentments.

Neil Strauss

There are a few surefire ways to make boundary problems that erode your self-worth and relationships.

- Sharing your raw emotions, feelings or perceptions and EXPECTING others to fully understand, validate or somehow figure out how to 'fix' things and/or make your painful feelings go away.
- Blaming your feelings and beliefs on others, instead of processing your own emotions and communicating your wants, needs and limits.
- Trying to get others to Understand Why you feel the way you do instead of Understanding How to support you.

power-under

TAKING LESS THAN 100% RESPONSIBILITY (dumping and blaming)

- Failing to understand and process our own emotions and perceptions
- Blaming others for our emotions, perceptions, 'You hurt me' 'You don't respect me'
- Failing to communicate our own needs, wants, expectations, limits (boundaries)
- Expecting others to 'guess' our own needs, wants and limits (boundaries)
- Complaining about or resenting others for not giving us what we need and want

power-over

TAKING ON MORE THAN 100% RESPONSIBILITY (controlling and enmeshing)

- Trying to understand and process others' emotions and perceptions for them
- Argue about who's emotions and perceptions are right or wrong, healthy or not
- Trying to 'fix' or apologize for others' emotions, beliefs and perceptions
- Making assumptions instead of asking others what their needs and wants are
- Expecting yourself to know what others need to feel loved, respected, 'rescued,' supported and cared for, instead of asking them with clear questions



Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously

Prentis Hemphill

BALANCED INTERDEPENDENCE

Healthy Boundaries to Build Trust, Respect and Love



Emotional connection is sharing aspects of yourself, such as your likes and dislikes, experiences, dreams, interests, ideas, wants, values and limits. Sharing allows for closeness, respect, trust and love, feeling seen, heard and valued, as you open up, hoping the other person handles your sharing of self with care.

Rather than sacrificing boundaries, shrinking or feeling unworthy of needs and wants, we need to limit what we share and expect from each person, based on our experiences of how trustworthy and capable they are of care-fully handling our wants, and the gifts of our self-sharing.



We connect with others at the level we're connected with ourselves.

Notice how listening is a boundary in of itself! For example, perhaps you're ok with listening to your sister's political views and secrets, but you know from past experiences that she isn't trustworthy to keep your secrets or yells at you about politics.

BOUNDARY STATEMENTS

Communicating a boundary involves speaking clearly with "I" statements

Ensure you are truly speaking your needs and limits, and that they are 100% within your power.

Boundaries are **not** about telling others what to do.



I CAN HELP, BUT I CANNOT DO THIS FOR YOU



I WILL NEED TO LEAVE THE ROOM IF YOU ARE YELLING



I NEED TIME TO PROCESS THIS, SO WE CAN TALK ABOUT THIS FRIDAY



I NEED, WANT, OR HAVE THIS SPECIFIC LIMIT _____



I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT THIS AND THIS IS MY STANCE ON THIS



HELP ME UNDERSTAND HOW I CAN HELP YOU



I LIKE WHEN YOU _____
I DON'T LIKE WHEN YOU _____
I'D LOVE TO TRY _____



NO THANK YOU
(WITHOUT J.A.D.E. JUSTIFYING, ARGUING, DEFENDING, EXPLAINING)



I HEAR YOU. THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR VIEW / OPINION / FEELINGS

Our physiological systems, including our emotional system, are personal processes, like blood circulation, digestion, breathing. We don't feel the need to defend, repress, or blame others for these processes, like we do our emotions. Can you imagine? **"You made me digest!"** That's how ridiculous and disempowering it is for us to blame others for our emotions, like **"You made me mad!"** or **"You make me jealous."**



Anyone gets to feel anything, anytime, for any reason.

Julia Colwell, PhD

What makes our emotional system much different than other systems is it tells us about external threats and our social connection needs. Instead of feeling hungry for food, we get hungry for affection, appreciation, support, inspiration, a sense of purpose and belonging. Just to name a few of our social connection needs.

Our emotions impact our posture, facial expressions, voice tone and more, offering

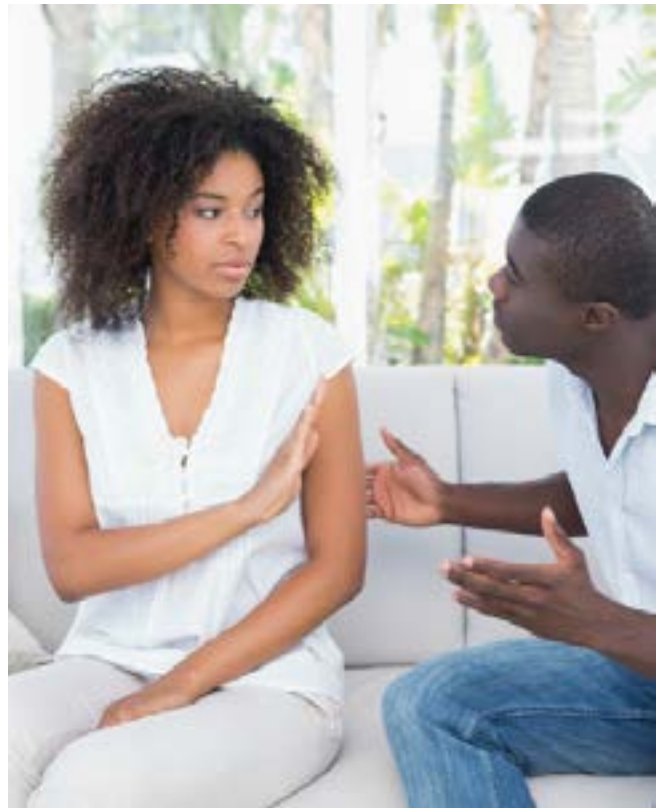


instant cues to what we're feeling. This open-loop nature of our emotional system means others are impacted by our state and we are impacted by theirs, back and forth. This resonance allows parents to tune in to what their children are experiencing and needing. As adults, it feels good when loved-ones notice our emotional signals, fostering trust, safety, connection and hormones, like oxytocin and serotonin.

However, there is an aspect to this empathy that stands at the heart of most relationship distress and dysfunction. When loved-ones have emotions, we may

try to make them feel better, as others' distress, can make us feel distressed and when they feel better, we feel better.

Without boundaries, we may jump in **to make other adults feel "better" (wanting to change or control their emotions so you can selfishly feel "better")**, landing you in emotional enmeshment, a confusing, anxiety-producing place of blurry boundaries, parental-like enabling, codependency, conflict, disempowerment, resentment, and disconnection, triggering even more painful protective emotions. This causes havoc, especially with our romantic partner.



We are the source of what we are feeling.

It might seem like someone 'made you' mad, scared, jealous, etc. but this is not the case. You create your own emotions within. Plus, all those times you didn't 100% own and allow emotions to move through your body (from childhood to now) means you have unprocessed emotions. Instead of blaming others, every trigger is an opportunity to process emotions (heal) through, understand what you need or want from yourself or others, and clearly communicate your needs and wants.

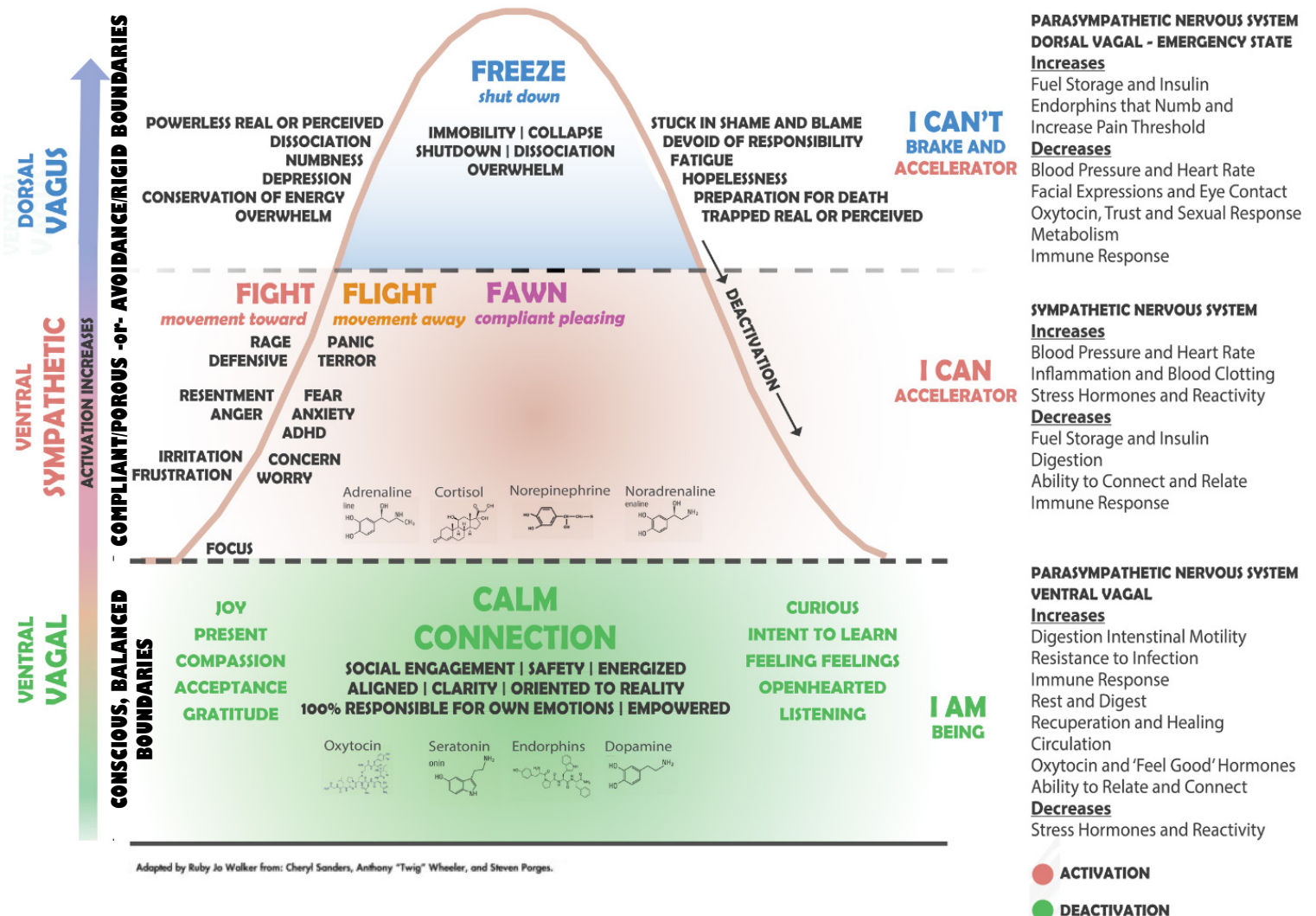
BALANCED BOUNDARIES

Allows for Calm Nervous System and Secure Connection

When we are conscious of our genuine needs and limits (boundaries) and making action-oriented choices aligned with them, we are able to provide ourselves with genuine safety and healthy connection (that can truly feel). When this occurs, our nervous system CALMS, providing emotional, relational, neurochemical and physical health benefits, such as:

- Access to the present moment, calm, self-connection and connection with others
- Increased oxytocin, serotonin and other 'feel good' neurochemicals and hormones
- Decreased stress chemicals and decreased risk of chronic stress conditions and diseases
- Ability to feel joy, happiness, gratitude, compassion, self-compassion, curiosity and more
- Capacity to relax, feel good, recuperate, rest, heal; improved immunity and digestion

Conscious Boundaries Impact the Nervous System



But... aren't I supposed to share all my 'genuine feelings'? **No!**

There is a common false belief that we are supposed to share all of our emotions and feelings with loved-ones to foster emotional connection, love and respect. As if we need to "share our genuine emotions" "be authentic" and "courageously vulnerable."



Attempts to abide by these **extreme, boundary-less beliefs**, expressing your emotions at others, hoping to get connection, love and respect, inevitably results in resentment, anger, conflict, shame, disappointment, anxiety and despair, rendering you powerless over your own emotional processing and well-being and blocking opportunities to create connection.

disconnecting

EXPRESSING PROTECTIVE EMOTIONS
BLAMING, DUMPING, SHAMING, CRITICIZING

MAKE OTHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR EMOTIONS
MAKING OTHERS GUESS YOUR WANTS/NEEDS

- "You made me mad!"
- "You don't spend any time with me."
- "I feel hurt. You let me down."
- "You should appreciate me more."
- "I feel jealous when you do that and you make me scared you'll leave me."

connecting

PROCESSING PROTECTIVE EMOTIONS
COMMUNICATING WANTS, NEEDS, LIMITS

TAKE 100% RESPONSIBILITY FOR OWN EMOTIONS
COMMUNICATING TO CREATE CONNECTION

- Speak what you need to not feel mad.
- "I want to spend more time together."
- "I need/want/expect _____"
- "I'd love to feel extra appreciated.
Anything important I can do for you?"
- "I trust you and feel lucky to have you."

If you want a better marriage, you'll need to give up making a project out of changing the relationship or partner and instead make a project out of expressing your own wants and needs.

Jenny Brown, PhD

enmeshing
CODEPENDENCY THINKING

BLURRY BOUNDARIES

COMPLIANCE and ANXIETY

I see you are mad and it's my fault and responsibility to fix your mad feelings.

I hear what you're saying but you **should** _____. I know what's best for you.

You **should** stop that! Here's my advice and what to do.

I don't want to lose you or disappoint you so I will only focus on your needs.

I see you are sad and I need to 'fix' your feelings, 'rescue' you or correct your opinions.

It is my job to guess, second guess, mindread, or figure out what you're thinking, mad about or what you're needing.

empowering
INTERDEPENDENCY THINKING

BALANCED BOUNDARIES

RESPECT and TRUST

I see. What are you needing from me? **OR** I need to take time away to process this.

I hear what you're saying. Thank you for being honest (Respect at Face Value).

I want to help. **How** can I help? What can I do?

I need to have, honor and understand my own needs and wants, while honoring yours.

I'm here to listen. Just being here is loving and supportive. (Openhearted Listening).

I can ask and be curious but it's your job to tell me what you need. We can also work together to decipher needs.



Boundary Tool

OPENHEARTED/ CURIOUS LISTENING

We feel emotionally connected with when we feel seen, heard, valued and respected. Thus, the best way to help anyone, including yourself, to feel "better" is to offer connection, by literally: seeing them; hearing them; valuing them; respecting them as an individual with their unique emotions and perceptions. Caution: Don't put up with, respond to, or react to angry outbursts, attacks or name-calling. State something like, "I need to take space away now" and take at least 10 minutes away.

You have the Intent to Learn and are curious about what they are saying.

Decide if you're available to provide the gift of your time and presence or not.

Feel your feelings and allow them to move (process) through your body.

Anyone gets to feel anything, anytime, for any reason. Don't try to 'fix' or make their emotions go away.

Remind yourself that others' emotions, beliefs and thoughts, have nothing to do with you, even if they are telling you they do.

Ask if they want help, advice or your ideas, rather than 'fixing' or 'rescuing'

Ask questions to Understand How they can feel better and get needs met, instead of trying to Understand Why.

Ask if they want your psychological interpretations before giving them. "You're doing this to please your father," or "You have issues around addiction."

Remind yourself, when we're upset, our systems mostly need to calm down. A hug can do wonders, and much more effective than talking.



There are only two possible intentions in any given moment: the Intent to Learn [connecting] or the Intent to Defend [disconnecting]

Margaret Paul, PhD

SIGNS YOU ARE **NOT** OPENHEARTED/CURIOUS **LISTENING**

You have the Intent to Protect, detecting blame, planning counterarguments

JADE-ing (Justifying, Arguing, Defending, Explaining) *see next page*

Finding and giving unsolicited criticism

Preparing to fix, rather than asking if they want your advice or fixing

Reacting with defenses, shutting down, spacing out, scrolling on your phone

Making assumptions or mind-reading instead of asking questions and Respecting Words at Face Value

Giving your **unsolicited** psychological interpretations. "You're doing this to please your father," or "You have issues around addiction."

Resenting listening instead of stating your need to listen later

Joining in the boxing ring to fight back, instead of letting them shadow box

Stuffing your feelings, instead of allowing them to flow through you

Apologizing for their bad day or anything else that isn't directly your fault isn't helpful (placating/rescuing)



J.A.D.E. CREATES CONFLICT

Justifying, Arguing, Defending, Explaining

IMPACT OF J.A.D.E.

- Erodes your confidence and lowers others' confidence and trust in you
- Sinks you into the Dreaded Drama Triangle (victim/hurt role)
- Waters down your boundaries, choices and values
- Anxiety, confusion and 'smoke & mirrors' effect for those that want to care for you, as they try to meander and guess what you truly need
- Shrinks your sense of self-worth, self-respect, self-trust
- Gives ammunition to boundary-violators, addicts and narcissists
- Perpetuates people-pleasing, compliance (FAWN) and poor boundaries
- Perpetuates feeling unlovable and unworthy of having needs and limits

The only exception is with children, as explaining, teaching and helping kids understand why we have certain choices, values, rules, expectations and limits in place is important.

IDENTIFY YOUR SIGNS OF J.A.D.E.

I am drawn into arguments that seem to go nowhere, but I think I need to defend myself.

I jump to respond to accusations I know are false or based on someone else's perception.

I argue or defend my choices, feelings, values, or limits instead of clearly stating them.

I sink into justifying/explaining my feelings or choices, instead of taking 100% responsibility.

I try to make others understand **why** I feel the way I do, instead of working together to understand **how** I can feel better by ensuring I'm getting my needs and wants met.

I tend to complain or blame others for my feelings or for not getting my needs met.

Without emotional boundary tools, emotions are contagious, causing enmeshment, conflict, shut-down and disconnection.



Example One

- You feel upset. I try to help you with advice or placating, 'I'm sorry,' "cheer up!" or "just let it go!"
- Instead of feeling connection, you feel dismissed or 'pathetic' for not being cheery and fine.
- So I try to placate more, until we're in a tug-of-war trying to force you to just 'feel better'.
- This erodes relationship. Openhearted Listening and Boundaries Skills can prevent this!

Example Two

- I'm in distress and venting about an issue. If neither of us have emotional boundary tools, you absorb this distress and feel nervous system activation in your own emotional system and do not like the way it feels (emotions like shame, anxiety, and anger). So you offer me suggestions and advice. Even if I like this advice, I'm still feeling the same emotional distress due to what I was originally venting about.
- You perceive my unchanged mood as sign of weakness, disrespect, or like you failed to 'help' me feel better. Now we're both irritated, so I try to make you understand why I feel the way I do by JADE-ing (justifying, arguing, defending or explaining). This makes me feel worse so frustration builds. I eventually run out of steam and may give up, shut down, fight back, feel resentment, or feel even crappier about myself.
- Openhearted Listening and Boundaries Skills can prevent this!

BUT WHAT IF MY PARTNER OR OTHER PEOPLE DON'T LISTEN TO ME?

If you keep trying to share your unfiltered opinions, hurts and feelings with someone who does not have Emotional Health and Boundaries Skills, you will likely continue to feel disconnection, frustration and more and more conflict. We can't expect people to learn things that they are unaware of or not interested in. However, with Boundaries Skills you have the power you need to create more fulfilling, safe relationships. And real connection comes from giving and receiving by asking for what we truly want and need from each other in a clear way.