



A Wall is Not a Boundary

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Have you ever had an unpleasant interaction with someone and walked away feeling upset even though you know it's not personal? What happened is that they overstepped your boundaries. Conscious awareness that it's their problem and not yours is not enough to protect you emotionally. To really be effective, boundaries need to be 100% intact at the conscious, unconscious, body, and soul levels of your being. When boundaries are 100% intact at all levels, it strengthens a person's sense of identity, i.e. I am me, and you are you. This is where I begin and end; this is where you begin and end. You don't pick up their negativity, and you don't project your negativity inappropriately. Intact boundaries create the capacity for respect and teamwork, i.e. the ability to invite people onto a neutral dance floor to dance with you.

To take an analogy from cell biology, think of yourself as a cell floating in a nutritious medium. Cells have a membrane composed of a lipid bilayer. Since lipids are fats, and oil and water don't mix, liquid can't just pass through the membrane. Cells get what they need from the environment by pumping in nutrients and pumping out waste products through specific receptors and channels, proteins that completely span the membrane.

Transport is thus selective and requires energy to pump things in and out. If there is a hole in the membrane the insides pour out, the outside pours in; the cell dies.

Cells communicate with each other through message molecules on their surface or by releasing soluble factors (like hormones) that fit into receptor molecules on the surface of the other cells like a lock and key. When the key opens the lock, it triggers an internal cascade of messages that go to the nucleus. If the cell is ruptured, the signaling molecules get scrambled and no longer work in the right sequence. Thus all successful interactions with the environment and each other are done at the surface of the (100% intact) cell membrane.


How does this apply to boundary issues in human beings? If people have less than 100% intact boundaries at all levels, they are very exposed. As the environment diffuses in, they are at the mercy of what's going on around them. They are not at choice about what they take in and can take in negative energy from the environment that they can't process. People who really have very little boundary capabilities can have trouble making decisions for themselves and may depend too much on other people's opinions.



They have trouble living their own lives, asking for what they want, and acting in their own best interest. When people are too easily influenced, they lose their sense of their own identity. In reaction, they may wall off and isolate themselves, emotionally or even physically. Unfortunately, a wall is not a boundary because it does not permit a flow of information. A wall indicates a traumatic wound, and like a scab on the skin, does not breathe or sweat the way healthy skin does.

The energy flow through a boundary breach can also move outward as people diffuse out into their environment. People who think that merging with someone is a form of love, or control freaks who believe that theirs is the only reality or the only right way to do things are leaking out past their own boundaries. Energy leakage in any direction can lead to burnout.

What can you do to maintain energetic boundaries at the conscious, unconscious, body, and soul levels in a given context? I recommend the Boundary Tap (developed by Marie Louise Muller, a craniosacral therapist from California.) In this technique tap ~2-3 minutes with your fingertips on the sternum (the

bone in the middle of your chest). Alternate the tapping with a feathering motion from the sternum up the base of the throat, up the neck, out the chin (like the Italian “back at you” gesture.) The tapping seals the energetic boundary, and the feathering motion ejects any unwanted negative energy. Use it to hold your center when you’re with your family, in your relationships, and at work. Use it to set boundaries with authorities, specific individuals, and people who particularly annoy you. Use it to keep you from getting sucked up into the news, a sad or scary movie, or friend’s problems. Use it when people do obnoxious behaviors that you particularly hate. Use it in every situation you can think of that is not personal but feels personal, and to quote Shakespeare, “To thine own self be true.” 



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