





# “You” As a Sacred Medicine Bundle: The Therapeutic Use of Self and Boundaries in Energy Healing

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**A**s an energy healer, you are devoted to healing others' wounds. Another's injuries might be great or small, obvious or hidden, made of tears or fears, but you know your task is to bring Light into the places causing pain and suffering.

Toward this end, a healer assembles a medicine bag. Contents include education, effective skills, and the starry kind of hope that empowers the work. These and other tools are contained within a leathery type of Love, one that provides protection for the self and clients, yet allows through grace and Spirit, the latter the “Higher Power” or “universal healing energy” often called upon in energy medicine.

Two of the most important prescriptions for effective energy healing are the ability to use both the self and boundaries. These are frequently overlooked or understated, even though they are powerful medicines indeed, especially when married. It is these we are going to examine both conceptually and practically, so that you can use them for your clients' and your own well-being.

A heart-centered energy medicine practice requires the ability to use both the self and boundaries as healing tools. The “self” is comprised of two main components—personality and professional standards—and there are three main types of boundaries to consider and manage: physical, verbal, and energetic. Both yourself and your boundaries can be beneficially shifted through the adaption of four main “personal styles,” or ways of interacting. Following is a list of these four styles:

- Strong and clear
- Rigid
- Distant
- Fused or merging

How can you best apply these four personal styles to yourself and your boundaries for healing purposes? It's first important to recognize yourself as a therapeutic tool; many of us don't. Frequently, medical professions emphasize instruments, prescriptions, and facilities, but fail to acknowledge the fact that the healing process is highly contingent on the training, style, skills, ethics, and care of the healer. In indigenous communities, a shaman's sacred bundle might include rocks, crystals, tobacco, beads, or arrows, but a native community never forgets that the ultimate medicinal authority lies within the healer.

The first time I was introduced to the concept of the self as a determining factor in healing was via a shaman in Costa Rica. With friends, I journeyed through the rain forest. I was determined to meet a particular renowned shaman who practiced in the Bribri Reservation, the last site hosting the local native people. While trudging through miles of vegetation, I struggled with my imagination. I was sure that each twisting vine was a snake.

He was “busy.” We had to wait to meet him in the morning. We set up camp.

After tossing and turning inside a very small tent in a very loud jungle all night, we were finally ushered into the healer's presence at dawn. One of the questions I asked the shaman was this:

“What is the most important skill you use in your practice?”

The shaman smiled and tapped on his chest. He didn't need to say any more.

How does “the self” influence the process and outcome of a healing session? Your personality is front



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and center. Personality is “how we come off” and is based on how others perceive us. A client often decides to trust or mistrust us based on their perceptions of our personality. We might assume we need a “likable” personality to be effective, but the truth is, we must be able to adopt any of the four personal styles—strong and clear, rigid, distant, and fusing—in order to be effective.

For the most part, we are most successful when emanating a strong and clear personality. We speak truth in a kind way. We say what we mean and mean what we say. We don’t tolerate manipulation, yet we are compassionate and fair. When we are clear and strong, our clients feel directed and safe. Sometimes being strong and clear isn’t useful, however. Sometimes we must portray ourselves as rigid or distant or soft.

Rigid characteristics include inflexibility, intractability, and correctness. A rigid person might as well greet you with a phrase my dad would say when I was growing up.

“It’s my way or the highway.”

Most people shrink into a ball or become angry when confronting a rigid personality. Some clients, however, require a dose of inflexibility. I once worked with a male client who was a sexual addict. I displayed extremely rigid personality traits with this client. I never touched him. I also insisted that he couldn’t act his addiction out while we were working together. Eventually he “broke” emotionally and began to deal with the underlying issues, those resulting from having been sexually abused as a child.

We tend to feel unheard or discounted when with a distancing person; however, distance can serve as a highly operative tool if used appropriately. Sometimes I separate myself from a client, perhaps gazing out the window, if I need to tap into my intuition. As an energy medicine specialist, you might often feel led to see, hear, or sense energetic information. It can be helpful to separate from the client’s perceptions in order to gain this additional insight.

Yet other times, distance provides you time and

space to assess the truth of a client’s statements. I have sometimes sensed that a client is not telling me everything I need to know to help them; stillness and quiet can encourage more truth telling.

Many therapeutic journals caution against the fourth personal style, which is fusion. This fluid style involves relating to the client to the point of merging with their feelings or experiences. The truth is that energy healing is sometimes most effective when performed with compassionate empathy. How else are we to fully understand what a client is going through? How else might they feel loved, assuaged, or open enough to allow in healing energy?

Of course, merging can be a dangerous tool if not used cautiously. As a healer, you can become “stuck” with a client’s disorders or energies, which can perpetuate problems in your own life. A client can become dependent or too reliant on your insight. You can also inaccurately receive or interpret what you are sensing and steer the client wrongly.

One way to customize our personality to assist clients is to make sure we establish and maintain professional standards, another extension of the self as a therapeutic tool. In general, we want to formulate our professional rules and communicate them so clearly that by the time a client is in our office, they are already clear about our professional expectations.

The short list of professional standards to create include the following:

- Training and credentials. We must have them and display them, as well as commit to ongoing education.
- Use of touch. As an Energy Medicine professional, you will most likely use touch. Decide how often and under what conditions you will—and won’t. Always ask before you touch a client. You must clearly state that you will never participate in sexual touch.
- Services and fees. This category includes a listing of services, the deliver process, hours worked, length of sessions, fees, cancellation policies, and means for setting up or cancelling an appointment.



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- Legal notifications. Research what legal documentation you need to—or should—provide. In many states, a healer is considered an unlicensed therapist. Must you state this or show documentation in your office? Use HIPPA forms? Is it in your best interest to have an informed consent form?

As strict as our policies might be, we must sometimes shift from one personal style to another in matters of professional standards. For instance, we must rigidly guarantee we will not use sexual touch but sometimes we might feel it appropriate to hug a client good-bye after a session. We might rigidly insist a client pay for a missed session—but what if a client gets stuck in a snowstorm on the way to the session? When establishing or enforcing professional guidelines, it's important to consider the therapeutic value of our standards. In general, strong and even rigid

be used as a therapeutic tool are also the same keys to applying boundaries medicinally. In fact, establishing appropriate boundaries enables the self to be an even more effective healer.

Boundaries enable you to hold uppermost a client's healing goals, maintain protocol and structure, secure a sacred space, and assure continual improvement. They help you objectively and intuitively read a situation; determine a diagnosis based on signs, symptoms, knowledge, experience, research, and intuition; clear negative energy; open healthy energy, and switch from one personal style to another. In fact, the best way to change from one personal style to another is by thinning, thickening, bolstering, or otherwise maneuvering the three main types of boundaries we will be considering: physical, verbal, and energetic. Fundamentally, a boundary is a tool to separate per-

*The same four personal styles that enable the self to be used as a therapeutic tool are also the same keys to applying boundaries medicinally.*

professional standards invite client responsibility. At first blush, this might not seem like an important therapeutic factor. Consider the client who suffers from an addiction. Our professional rules teach responsible behavior. In fact, to treat our clients as less than responsible adults is to infantilize them, which doesn't serve them or us.

As well, strong policies are self and other caring. Caring for the self encourages clients to care for themselves. Because we count, so do they.

Of course, as willing as we are to be strong, we must also be willing to be fluid. I once worked with a perfectionistic client who was almost obsessive compulsive about being on time. She paid for her sessions well in advance. When she got stuck in traffic, I gifted her the session. She said being “let off the hook” changed her life; she had never before experienced grace.

The same four personal styles that enable the self to

ceptions of reality. Depending on where and how we set our boundaries, we can tune out certain stimulation so we can better focus on important information or activity. All types of boundaries, however—physical, verbal, and energetic—perform one or more of the same four basic functions:

- Keep healthy energy in
- Keep unhealthy energy, as well as distractions and interference, out
- Free unhealthy energy
- Open to life-enhancing and healthy new energy

Physical boundaries are achieved through the movement or non-movement of your physical body, such as body language, as well as the use of space between you and your client. They are also a result of the working environment. In the universe of an energy healer, physical boundaries also encompass choices about touch and non-touch.

Strong physical boundaries assure safety and call for openness. They start with the arrangement of your

furniture. For instance, putting a coffee table or physical separation between you and a seated client tells a client it is “talk time” and that you are the leader. Establishing your healing table in a different space, perhaps surrounded by a curtain, invites “healing time.” If needed, you can switch personality traits between talk and healing time, perhaps moving from strong to fluid, in order to better meet a client’s needs.

It’s important to figure out if you want your environment to reveal details about you or not. Some practitioners want their sessions totally client-focused and use rigid or distancing methods to do so. They display no personal effects or pictures and most likely use neutral decorating. They either have an office outside of the home or make sure the client never enters their home private space. On the other hand, the more flexible healer might exhibit items that promote their own humanity and interests, but don’t interfere with the client’s process. Yet other healers, for instance, those who work with clients’ inner child issues, might stuff an office full of soft and plush objects, those that warm the client’s heart.

Body language is another ideal way to implement physical boundaries. A strong and clear personality leans forward to make a point and then away in order to give a client space for processing. Clear personalities always ask before touching and also refuse to touch a client if doing so would compromise their own boundaries. For instance, it’s not uncommon to trigger our own issues when working with a client. It’s better to not touch a client than to expose them to your own problems. Keeping distance between you and a client, maybe holding your hands over them instead of touching them, can allow a client their own private experience. Then again, sometimes we might fuse with a client to get the job done. I know one healer who works with children and often hugs and strokes them to create security inside a womb-like environment.

Verbal boundaries present an excellent way to create healthy healing protocol. It’s important to know that verbal boundaries are created by what is said as well as what is not said. While this caveat applies across the board to all healing professionals, energy healers



have an additional challenge—and advantage—in this arena. After all, much of our healing information and power comes from “beyond,” and cannot always be heard by all.

It is extremely useful to switch between personal styles in regard to verbalism in order to promote the healthiest result, sometimes maintaining strict boundaries in regard to offering feedback, sharing intuitive information, performing self-disclosure, and sometimes softening the edges. The primary rule of thumb is that verbal sharing must center on the client’s welfare. For instance, telling bits of your own story should not burden your client or put them in the position of acting like your therapist. Nor should you share anything that would endanger yourself.

not. These messages, which might come bidden and unbidden, do not always need to be shared. Some of them are presented to you to guide your work. Instead of setting a hard and fast rule, learn how to recognize the symptoms that tell you how to respond to your intuition. For instance, I only share information if I feel a nudge from behind. If I sense a twist in my stomach, I know that I can use the intuitive information but cannot comment on it.

Our discussion of intuition edges us toward our final discussion, that of establishing pertinent and healthy energetic boundaries. The setting, maintenance, and shifting of energetic boundaries actually helps us shift between personal styles and aptly use our personal self and our physical and verbal boundaries to our

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Do not talk about your own difficult divorce, even though the experience might benefit your client, if you might trigger yourself emotionally or potentially damage your own reputation.

Most commonly, healers offer verbal comments from one or several of the following categories, which range from very open to less open disclosures. Being acquainted with these categories can help you switch styles during a session and remain safe at the same time.

- Intimate interaction: Verbal and non-verbal (leaning forward, touching heart) openness; sharing of a detail from your life.
- Reactive response: Connecting emotionally without revealing personal information. For instance, you can cry if a client is sad.
- Controlled response: Sharing of literary details, spiritual quotes, and other related data.
- Reflective feedback: Feeding back what the client is saying. “I hear you are going through this.”

As an energy healer, you must also sift and weigh the benefits of sharing intuitively gained information or

own and our client’s advantage.

As I explain in my book, *Energetic Boundaries*, there are four basic types of energetic boundaries, which are invisible yet real fields of energy that surround our body. These four categories are physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual, each of which contains several auric fields as well as hundreds of magnetic fields. Taken together, these electromagnetic or biofields, which emanate from the physical body, are programmed with our internal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.

The information disseminated by these fields interacts with our external environment, including others’ energetic fields, to access intuitive information, receive and send healing energy, and provide us the clues needed to decide how to operate within a client session. Our energetic boundaries also inform our clients about what we’re really feeling, thinking, and wanting to do. In a way, the self IS a projection of our energetic boundaries, for these fields of energy reach a client way before our actions or words do. They also collect information about our clients before they can open their mouths.





It takes a lifetime of experience to gain control of our boundaries. In general, however, the best way to work with them is through conscious intent.

Consciousness is awareness. By making a decision—setting an intention—in regard to our energetic boundaries, we can formulate them as strong, rigid, distant, or fused. By shifting our energetic boundaries, our personality automatically shifts and we are able to make decisions about our professional standards with clarity.

For instance, let’s imagine that you are working with a client who uses manipulation to avoid feeling her feelings. By paying attention to the sensation of being manipulated, you can decide that you need rigid boundaries in order to avoid buying into a client’s avoidance mechanisms. Sensing that she is not able to coerce you, the client might get mad—but might also break down and dig into her deeper issues.

I recommend that you consciously program your energetic boundaries to automatically respond to a situation and transition you into the most helpful personal style. To accomplish this goal, bring yourself into a meditative state and enter your heart space. Now embrace the fact that these are your boundaries and that you can auto-program them for your own and others’ well-being.

At this point, your boundaries will become strong, rigid, distant, or fusing as needed. Your job is to pay attention to what your boundaries are doing and to adapt to your boundaries, not the other way around.

For instance, you might suddenly feel like your boundaries are disengaging or distancing you from your client. You feel farther and farther away from them, even though you are not moving. It is now time to ask yourself why your boundaries “decided” that you had to separate from your client. Does your client need personal space for reflection? Is there need for you to become more observational rather than participatory?

As we’ve been exploring, your role as a healer includes commitment to continually developing the medicine in your sacred bundle. Most important is the growth of you. Yes, “you” are a therapeutic tool, but you are also a being of Light. Your personality, professional standards, and boundaries are tools that affect a client’s perception of themselves, their needs, and their process, but these factors also enable you to engage the Light so missing in the world. Switching between personal styles enables you to draw from the wellspring of intuition and love that lies within you, and also assures that your client learns how to do the same. If healing is truly about filling in darkness with Light, then using self and boundaries for this purpose is to draw the Heavens to the Earth. It is to become the Light that the world is seeking. €