

## **/International Conversation Café**

Lifestyle Topic:            Personal Boundaries

The word boundary may bring several ideas to your mind. You might think about the borders of your property or nation. It defines where ownership begins and ends. For example, “The Ural mountains mark the boundary between Europe and Asia.”

Boundaries can be taken in an abstract way to mean what we allow in our lives and what we don't allow. We allow certain foods or beverages and do not allow other foods or beverages. We draw a boundary. We say yes to some people and no to others. We say yes to taking on certain responsibilities and no to other responsibilities. Some things in life we have no control over, like accidents, death, illnesses, or in some cases, job loss. But many things we can control. We can control such things like how we allow people to treat us. This is what the topic of boundaries are all about.

*Explain the concept of personal boundaries to others in your group.*

Here are five areas that we may control for ourselves. As you read through them, give an example of how that boundary could be stepped on.

1. intellectual worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own thoughts and opinions, as are others)
2. emotional worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own feelings to a given situation, as are others)
3. physical worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your space, however wide it may be, as are others)
4. social worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own friends and to pursuing your own social activities, as are others)
5. spiritual worth and boundaries (you are entitled to your own spiritual beliefs, as are others)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/romantically-attached/201608/4-ways-set-and-keep-your-personal-boundaries>

**Read through the following story. Notice how boundaries were violated.**

My friend Chris had a problem with his neighbor that perfectly illustrates how boundaries work. Chris' neighbor would come into his yard and bring Chris' newspaper from the driveway to his doorstep. She'd pick a few of Chris' flowers along the way. Chris felt annoyed but didn't say anything. Chris figured it wasn't worth making a stink over it. The neighbor probably assumed it was okay for her to move the paper and take a few flowers. Maybe she thought she was doing Chris a favor. Months passed like this. Chris would sometimes find her neighbor's dog in his yard. The dog pooped on his grass and chased away the birds at his bird feeder. Still, Chris said nothing. He wanted to be a “good neighbor.” He didn't want a reputation for being difficult and he worried his neighbor might get angry at him if he told her to stay off his property. Finally, Chris came home one day to find the neighbor's kids playing in his yard –

yelling, trampling the flowers, leaving empty juice boxes on his front step, and throwing toys around like they owned the place. Understandably, Chris' blood was boiling at this point.

*Explain how the neighbor treated Chris.*

*Tell about a time when someone used you or your possessions unfairly.*

Chris was responsible for not setting and enforcing the boundary. He allowed his neighbor to take advantage of his lack of boundaries. Certainly, it seems, Chris' neighbor behaved badly. She is, of course, responsible for her own actions, her kids, and her dog.

*What could have Chris done differently from the beginning?*

**What keeps people from setting boundaries? Read through the following suggestions and give an example of each.**

1. **Fear**

It's scary to do something different. What are you actually afraid of? How likely is this to happen? What will happen if you set a boundary? What will happen if you don't? By asking yourself questions like these, you can give yourself a reality check and find out if your fear is alerting you of real danger or keeping you stuck.

2. **Ambivalence**

Similar to fear, ambivalence represents that you aren't 100% convinced that boundaries will solve your problem. Some ambivalence is fine. You don't need to be 100% sure before you act.

3. **You don't know how**

If you grew up in a family without boundaries, you probably never saw anyone model or teach you healthy boundaries. Setting boundaries is a skill that can be learned.

4. **Low self-worth**

Some part of you feels unworthy or unlovable. Therefore, you always struggle to prove your worth by putting other people's needs before your own. You're not used to being treated with respect, so you don't even know what it looks like.

5. **People-pleasing**

You don't want to ruffle feathers. You don't want to disappoint people. You'll pretty much avoid conflict at all costs.

<https://livewellwithsharonmartin.com/what-are-boundaries/>

*What are some ways you can set boundaries in your own life.?*

*In what situations can you not set personal boundaries?*

