

## Boundaries Exercise

This exercise is designed to help promote a sense of safety and control in your life. Not over others, **but control and responsibility for HOW YOU EXPERIENCE others.** The exercise is profoundly effective when done mindfully.

Directions;

1. On a piece of poster board or other large piece of paper draw a series of concentric circles. (this will look like a target with a bulls eye in the center)
2. In the bulls eye write your name.
3. Now write the names of all your significant others in relation to the distance from you. The distance will usually be some type of emotional distance. This might be from mistrust, dislike, hatred, dissimilarity, etc
4. Each circle that separates the zones represents some type of filter or boundary. For example the second circle out might represent “dishonesty” so that anyone who has lied to you or cheated you will NOT be allowed in closer than that circle, so they can’t enter the next closer zone.
5. You might look at what you do or allow in each zone. For example, in the closest zone next to you, you might find that you disclose almost everything, that you trust that person implicitly and that you like to be with them.
6. Now you look at each name and decide if you want to MOVE them, either closer or further away from you. Circle each name and put an arrow that indicates the movement. If you are satisfied where someone is and no movement is needed then leave that name alone.
7. For each person that you want to move, write up at least 3 and no more than 5 SPECIFIC behaviors that **YOU** are going to do to facilitate the move.

**Remember THIS ISN’T ABOUT THEM, it’s about YOU. You don’t ask them to change, you don’t demand that they change; you don’t even tell them what you are doing. YOU change what you have been doing. It’s your RESPONSE-ABILITY to bring about the movement.** Examples of this might be;

- a. (to move someone out further): when I talk with my mother, who tends to gossip and demean, I will; 1) limit the conversation to ONLY 5 minutes at a time 2x per week, 2) steer the conversation toward gardening, genealogy or her health, 3) NOT participate when she starts to gossip about anyone, I will immediately, kindly, GET OFF THE PHONE, or leave the room, 4) I will be kind and firm in what I do and not expect her to change at all.
- b. (to move someone in closer): I want my friend, Barbara to be closer so I will 1) make contact with her at least 2x per week, 2) I will learn to validate and encourage her about things that are important to HER, 3) I will respect her boundaries and not be intrusive, 4) I will extend to her based on wanting to be around her, not who called last or whose turn it is, 5) I will remember her birthday, know her passion list items, her favorite color, food, music, etc. (Gottman’s Love Map)

