

ESTABLISHING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Life With God In Recovery

STAYING STRONG: Establishing Healthy Boundaries



But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. (Psalm 3:3 NIV)

People who struggle with addiction are often those who have been exposed to life altering situations. The events sometimes occurred when they were children and they were unable to correctly process or reason why they happened. Without knowing an effective way to express the impact of these events, their boundaries were weakened and they learned a pattern of responding that was unhealthy. Family breakdown, abuse, discrimination, and bullying are examples of situations to which many of us have been exposed and found ourselves feeling forced to do something which did not contribute to our own well-being. We simply learned to cope in whatever ways we could.

Our Heavenly Father is aware of all the events of our lives, and when we enter into a living relationship with Him through Jesus, He will help us rebuild safe and healthy boundaries so we can experience the fullness of life He created us to enjoy.

A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls. (Proverbs 25:28 NLT)

Boundaries help us live respectfully and safely in our relationships. When we define, and uphold personal boundaries, they contribute to our peace of mind. They eliminate resentful feelings which form when we feel compelled to do things that we do not want to do, and which do not contribute to our well-being. How do we follow God's ways in the freedom which boundaries provide?

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 NIV)

Two actions that will contribute to a healthy lifestyle are: 1) setting personal limits; and, 2) setting limits on those we are in contact with. Both are equally important for a healthy and happy life.

Personal Boundaries: As we come into a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, we discover satisfying living in a surprising form – life within limits. Imagine how our road systems would be without rules for driving.

It would be utter chaos for road users. So it is with personal boundaries, our lives will be chaotic and at risk if we do not follow God's rules. Setting and living within personal limits is essential in helping us build our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God, created to live with meaning and purpose.

Here are some methods we can use to establish or strengthen our personal boundaries:

- ✚ We say "Yes" to those behaviours that God says bring love, joy and peace to our lives.
- ✚ We say "No" to negative behaviour that steals the satisfying life that God offers us.
- ✚ We get rid of destructive resentment and buried anger. We find peace through forgiveness and letting go.
- ✚ We say "No" to good desires which are just not wise to pursue at this time.
- ✚ We determine to wait for healthy alternatives instead of gratifying our momentary desires with damaging sinful activities.

Live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit you are free. (Galatians 5:16-18 NLT)

Boundaries With Others: We cannot actually set limits on others but what we can do is set limits on our exposure to people who are behaving poorly. We can't change others or make them behave right. We need to let people be who they are but separate ourselves from them when their behaviour is destructive and negatively impacts us. It's beneficial for all concerned when we do this. We are not being unloving. Separating ourselves protects love, because we are taking a stand against things that destroy love.

Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence." This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: "Love others as well as you love yourself." These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them. (Matthew 22:37-40 MSG)

How do we set healthy limits and separate ourselves from harmful events? We do whatever it takes to honour God in every situation and choose to wholeheartedly follow His ways. We purposefully choose to live in an atmosphere of safety, blessing, and encouragement. Here are some actions we can take that will help us set healthy boundaries with others:

- ✚ We name behaviours that are safe and unsafe so our expectations are known to others.
- ✚ We take responsibility for our part in creating a safe and respectful environment.
- ✚ When words become heated or harsh we stop and step away until emotions calm down and thoughts become clear.
- ✚ We take time out to seek God's guidance and ask for counsel from a trustworthy person.
- ✚ We seek forgiveness for our role in any problem.
- ✚ We learn how to communicate and act with love and respect, and ask for the same in return.
- ✚ We refuse to gossip and slander, no matter how difficult the situation, and instead, entrust the person with whom we are having difficulty to God.

Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:28 NIV)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Which of these two are harder for me, setting boundaries on my own wants or setting boundaries on those I am in contact with?
2. How does God help in my boundary setting?
3. Where am I doing well and where do I need to grow in living with healthy boundaries?

Loving God, I come to You today and present my life before You, past, present, and future. I want to live for You. I want to live in the safety of Your love. Heal me from those things in my past that impact my current relationships. Forgive me for ignoring those boundaries that bring safety to my life. Give me the desire, the courage, and the strength to follow Your principles each day. I am so thankful that your grace is greater than anything that has wounded me. Teach me how to love You and to love others, so that my relationships are healthy and balanced. Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life. I choose to follow you from this day forward. Amen