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Part 1 - Better Boundaries: How to Create Limits with Love

Does the pressure to please ever leave you feeling overwhelmed because you're constantly saying yes to everyone's requests? Or worry about saying no or asking for what you want because you might look selfish or don't care about anyone else?

If so, it might be time to create some boundaries.

However, I'm not talking about traditional boundaries. Instead, I want to give you an alternative that will serve and support your life, feel good to create, and are easier to communicate to others.

Plus, they're also more satisfying for everyone involved.

But first, it's essential to understand the roots of traditional boundaries and why an alternative is needed.

So let me tell you a little story...

I read a Facebook post about someone lost while hiking in the mountains. They had no idea which way to go, and the more they walked, the more they felt like they were going in circles.

I get lost all the time, so this post caught my attention.

Thank goodness these folks remembered they had a compass in their backpack.

They were excited about this!

I was glad for them, but my first thought was, "how would a compass help if I didn't know my car's direction from where I was standing" – like I said, I'm directionally challenged.

But back to the story...

They pulled out the compass and used it to orient themselves and figure out which direction to go. Eventually, they found their way back to the trail and returned safely to their car.

That was lucky for them, but also for me and maybe you.

While I was thinking about their experience, I realized something. Just like the compass helped them find their way back to the car, being faithful and true to ourselves helps us find our way in life.

Knowing who you are – how you feel, what you value and need, and speaking and acting in alignment with that inner authority, guides you like a compass towards your true path – always coming back home to yourself.

This realization was powerful, and it got me thinking about my internal compass. If I were going to stay aligned with my needs and values, I wouldn't say yes to everything, and I would check my compass and pay closer attention to how I feel and what I value so I could stay on MY path.

If I can't say yes to something from a place of joy, then it isn't a "yes" at all; it's a "maybe" at best, but I definitely need to stop before saying a word and check in with my internal compass.

I also began to understand that saying "no" to things that don't align with my values and needs is not just a way to stay true to my inner compass but an act of self-care, and love, not just for me but also for the people in my life.

Saying yes, when you mean no, can be a disaster for everyone involved and often leads to resentment, overwhelm, and burnout.

Many people would say this is the process of setting "boundaries."

In general, boundaries refer to the limits or borders that define the extent or scope of something. Boundaries can be physical, such as a fence that marks the boundary between two properties or the borders between two countries.

When you look up the definition of the word boundary, you realize it's clearly a way to separate us – This is mine, not yours. It automatically sets up a defensive viewpoint. Don't cross my boundary, or else!

And it's ultimately true with personal boundaries as well.

The problem with typical boundary setting is how most people understand the idea. Often when people create boundaries for themselves, they do so from an unconscious defensive posture. You "shouldn't" do this, say that, ask this, etc.

And because of you, I need to create a boundary to keep me safe and you out. And don't cross that boundary, or else!

It doesn't sound like much fun, does it?

This dilemma isn't anyone's fault; it's just because we are all indoctrinated into the same good/bad right/wrong cultural paradigm.

I know, that sounds pretty daunting!

Let me break it down. In most cultures, when people are uncomfortable, they start looking for who is right and who's wrong. And if you're wrong, you must be judged and punished to keep the rest of us safe.

There's a lot more to it than that, but this is the essence of why so many boundaries have judgment and blame energy baked into them.

Then it gets worse. When you go to express your "boundary," the other person senses the judgmental, blaming energy, and the conversation is usually filled with unnecessary tension and defensiveness.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

Just like the compass keeps us on the right path, our inner integrity – our feelings, our needs, and our values – guided us safely home without the necessity for judging and blaming and shaming.

Yes, I said necessity.

In the following two parts of this article series, I'll explain why, in our good/bad right/wrong culture, judging, blaming, and shaming are integral components of creating traditional boundaries.

I will also give you some examples and show you an alternative that will be more in harmony with your values, help you stand in a place of love instead of defensiveness while creating and communicating your "boundaries," AND, to top it all off, get better, and more satisfying results for everyone involved.

Sound good? Stay tuned.

Until next time...

With love,
Beth

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