

Boundaries

Point of the Assignment:

1) To understand the concept of boundaries. 2) To see how the lack of boundaries negatively impacts time management. 3) To give strategies for setting appropriate boundaries with others.

Definition:

Boundaries are invisible property lines that mark those things for which we are responsible. In other words, boundaries define who we are and who we are not.

According to the author, there are a few types of boundaries:

Physical boundaries determine who may touch us and under what circumstances.

Mental boundaries give us the freedom to have our own thoughts and opinions.

Emotional boundaries help us to deal with our own emotions and disengage from the harmful, manipulative emotions of others.

Spiritual boundaries help us distinguish God's will from our own and give us renewed awe for our Creator.

Note: One more added by your professor:

Time boundaries help us to register that we have a right to determine how we will spend our time.

Excerpts from the Book:

(Page 29)

Indivisible Property Lines and Responsibility

“In the physical world, boundaries are easy to see. Fences, signs, walls, moats with alligators, manicured lawns, or hedges are all physical boundaries. In their differing appearances, they give the same message: **THIS IS WHERE MY PROPERTY BEGINS.** The owner of the property is legally responsible for what happens on his or her property. Non-owners are not responsible for the property.”

“Me and Not Me”

“Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom. If I know where my yard begins and ends, I am free to do with it what I like. Taking responsibility for my life opens up many different options. However, if I do not “own” my life, my choices and options become very limited.”

Examples of Boundaries

- **Skin** – basic example is your physical skin.

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- **Words** – you can create good protective fences with your words – NO.
- **Truth** – knowing the truth about yourself.
- **Geographical distance** – keeping yourself away from dangerous or unhealthy people
- **Time** – Taking time off from a person, or a project, can be a way of regaining ownership over some out-of-control aspect of your life where boundaries need to be set.
- **Emotional distance** – Emotional distance is a temporary boundary to give your heart the space it needs to be safe; it is never a permanent way of living.
- **Other people** – you need to depend on others to help you set and keep boundaries.
- **Consequences** – Trespassing on other people's property carries consequences.

Boundary Problems

Compliants – Saying “yes” to the bad

Avoidants – Saying “no” to the good

Controllers – Not respecting others' boundaries

Nonresponsives – Not hearing the needs of others

Why People May Struggle with Boundary Problems:

There are a few possible causes of struggling with boundaries.

1. People **who have been abused** have learned that their boundaries do not matter because others have disregarded their boundaries (*the authors state this is the primary root of the problem*).
2. People who come from **collectivistic cultures** where it is normal and appropriate to have one's life and identity inter-mixed with others (i.e. family members), or where you are expected to never say 'no' to parental/family requests. Saying 'no' maybe a foreign concept to such people.
3. People who **learned poor boundaries** from parents/family/caregivers, etc. Some people may have difficulty setting appropriate boundaries because poor boundary setting was role-modeled to them by others. For example, a mother who tells her daughter to tolerate inappropriate behavior from a boyfriend/husband because otherwise he will leave you.
4. Based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) defined 16 personality types, certain **personality types** may also struggle with boundaries:
 - a. **Feeling** (Feeling preferences: ESFJ, ISFJ, ESFP, ISFP, ENFJ, ENFP, INFJ, INFP) may have a hard time saying “no” because they don't want to hurt other peoples' feelings.
 - b. **Perceiving** (Perceiving preferences: ESTP, ESFP, ISFP, ISTP, ENFP, INFP, ENTP, INTP) may have a hard time saying “no” to unexpected interruptions because of their preference for being spontaneous.
 - c. **Idealists** (iNtuitive & Feeling: ENFJ, ENFP, INFJ, INFJ, INFP) may struggle with setting emotional boundaries due to their ability to empathize with others and/or wanting to help or please others.
 - d. **Guardians** (Sensing & Judging: ESTJ, ESFJ, ISTJ, ISFJ) may feel responsible for providing for other peoples' physical needs due to their natural sense of responsibility.

Boundaries and Time Management

Based on experience in working with students and other people trying to succeed at the journey of education and pursuing their dream jobs, I have noticed something: Often people who struggle with time management also tend to struggle with having healthy boundaries – knowing what they should take ownership for, and what they should not.

Covey's Quadrants:

Having healthy boundaries directly impacts time management. A person who has difficulty saying “no” will find that their best-laid plans for using their time effectively will be constantly overridden by other people’s emergencies, interruptions, priorities, and activities. To have good time management skills, you need to be able to distinguish the difference between appropriate requests and inappropriate requests according to the book “First Things First” by Steven Covey.

Appropriate requests:

- 1) **Urgent & Important** (*Quadrant I*),
- 2) **Not Urgent & Important** (*Quadrant II*)

Inappropriate requests:

- 3) **Urgent/Not Important** (*Quadrant III*);
- 4) **Not Urgent/Not Important** (*Quadrant IV*)

(Steven Covey’s - Covey, S.R. (1994). *First things first*. New York: Fireside.) (Or see handout: Covey’s Quadrants)

Being able to distinguish the difference between Urgent and Important issues requires understanding where **you end**, and **they begin** (healthy boundaries). For example, understanding that someone else’s request is important to them, but not to you. Only then, will you be able to spend most of your time in Quadrant II – Important/Not Urgent. **That is how you can pro-actively move from a life of crisis response to crises prevention.**

Ways to Handle the Rest of the World

(Time Management Tips for College Students)

David Ellis, author of “*Becoming a Master Student*” offers several tips to help students get the most out of now by getting focused on when you study. His section “Ways to handle the rest of the world lists the following tips below.” Five of those tips are examples of setting boundaries with other people. See if you can identify which of these tips is an example of setting boundaries:

1. **Pay attention to your attention.** Breaks in concentration are often caused by internal interruptions. Your own thoughts jump in to divert you from your studies. When this happens notice these thoughts and let them go. Perhaps the thought of getting something else done is distracting you. One option is to handle that other task now and study later. Or you can write yourself a note about it, or schedule a specific time to do it.
2. **Agree with living mates about study time.** This includes roommates, spouses, and children. Make the rules clear, and be sure to follow them yourself. Explicit agreements – even written contracts – work well. One student always wears a colorful hat

when he wants to study. When his wife and children see the hat, they respect his wish to be left alone.

3. **Get off the Phone.** The telephone is the ultimate interrupter. People who wouldn't think of distracting you might call, or text at the worst times because they can't see that you are studying. You don't have to be a telephone victim. If a simple "I can't talk, I'm studying" doesn't work, use dead silence. It's a conversation killer. Or short-circuit the whole problem: Turn off the phone. Other solutions include forwarding to voice mail and studying at the library.
4. **Learn to say no.** This is a timesaver and valuable life skill for everyone. Some people feel it is rude to refuse a request. But saying no can be done effectively and courteously. Others want you to succeed as a student. When you tell them you can't do what they ask because you are busy educating yourself, most people will understand.
5. **Hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door.** Many hotels will give you a free sign, for the advertising. Or you can create a sign yourself. They work. Using signs can relieve you of making a decision about cutting off each interruption – a timesaver in itself.
6. **Get ready the night before.** Completing a few simple tasks just before you go to bed can help you get in gear the next day. If you need to make some phone calls first thing in the morning, look up those numbers, write them on 3x5 cards, and set them near the phone. If you need to drive to a new location, take note of the address and put it next to your car keys. If you plan to spend the next afternoon writing a paper, get your materials together. Pack your lunch or gas up the car. Organize your diaper bag, briefcase, or backpack.
7. **Call ahead.** We often think of talking on the telephone as a prime time-waster. Used wisely, the telephone can actually help manage time. Before you go shopping, call the store to see if it carries the items you're looking for. If you're driving, call for directions to your destination. A few seconds on the phone can save hours of wasted trips and wrong turns.
8. **Avoid Noise Distractions.** To promote concentration, avoid studying in front of the television and turn off the radio. Many students insist that they study better with background noise, and this might be true. Some students report good results with carefully selected and controlled music. For many others, silence is the best form of music to study by. At times noise levels might be out of your control. A neighbor or roommate might decide to find out how far he can turn up his music before the wall crumble. Meanwhile, your ability to concentrate on the principles of sociology goes down the drain. To avoid this scenario, schedule study sessions during periods when your living environment is usually quiet. Many parent-students will study after the children go to bed or before they wake up. If you live in a residence hall, ask if study rooms are available. Where headphones to help drown out the noise. Or go somewhere else where it's quiet, such as the library. Some students find quiet cafes, self-service laundries, and places of worship.

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9. **Notice How Others Misuse Your Time.** Be aware of repeat offenders. Ask yourself if there are certain friends or relatives who consistently interrupt your study time. If avoiding the interrupter is impractical, send a clear message. Sometimes others don't realize that they are breaking your concentration. You can give them the gentle yet firm reminder. If this doesn't work, there are methods to make your message more effective.

Can you recognize which tips are boundaries? List them below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(Check your answers –The correct answers are listed on the last page of this document. Be sure to check your answers, because you will not receive credit for this assignment until you get this section correct.)

Identifying Your Own Ability to Set Boundaries

After learning about boundaries, answer the following questions:

Do you find that you have difficulty in this area?	Yes / No
Do you ever feel like your life is out of control?	Yes / No
Do you feel like you spend much of your time in Quadrant I or Quadrant III	Yes / No
Do you have a hard time saying 'no' even when you want/need to?	Yes / No

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you may struggle with boundary issues.

If you feel you do struggle with being able to set appropriate boundaries with other people, identify the source from "***Professor's Note: People Who May Struggle with Boundary Problems***" above. What source(s) (*abuse, culture, personality, or a combination*) cause you to struggle? Explain your response.

Alternative Suggestions for Saying 'No'

Additional options to directly saying 'no' provided by your professor:

1. **"I Have A Policy."** "I have a policy to never lend money to friends or family members," or, "I have a policy to never make significant purchases without first speaking to my wife (or husband, or partner)."

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2. **“I Have Plans.”** A great concrete everyday phrase that can affirm your interests as well as you power without spoiling your relationship is, “I already have plans,” or, “I have another event I’ve committed to that evening.”
3. **“Not Now.”** Maybe another time. This softens the blow of a “No” and leaves the door open to a future request. “Not now” should only be used in those cases where there does exist a real possibility for addressing the others’ needs in the future.
4. **“I Prefer to Decline Rather Than Do a Poor Job.”** When you decline rather than do a poor job, you are not only affirming your own interests but also paying attention to the relationship. You would *both* be worse off, and so would your relationship, if you say “Yes” and then a job that turns out to be much less than satisfactory. Know your limits and acknowledge them freely. Spend your time doing what you do well and what is truly best for you. Both you and the other will be better off in the long run.
5. **“No, but here is what I CAN do for you....”** Sometimes setting boundaries can be challenging when, for various reasons, we may want to say, “Yes,” but need to say “No.” When you find yourself needing to set boundaries with someone by saying “No” to a request, you may consider an alternative as a form of boundary setting, by saying: *“No, ...but here is what I CAN do for you...”* Then you decide what you are willing and able to give.
6. **“Thanks, but I’m good.”** Sometimes boundary setting involves telling someone that you are not interested in what they are trying to give you. One way to say ‘no’ is to say, “Thanks, but I am good.” That way you are telling them that you have what you need and don’t need anything else – including what they are trying to give you.
7. **“Let’s do this another time.”** Sometimes someone asks you for something, and you may be interested, but it is not a good time. For example, you are trying to get out the door to go to work or school, and your friend wants to get together to do something fun. In this case, you can offer a better time to do it, such as after work. There is an important point to remember. You should not use this response if you have no intention or interest in following through. By telling someone that you are interested, but that it is not a good time, you are going to leave that person waiting in expectation that you will follow through. If you have no interest or intention to follow through, then you should use one of the other options presented above.

Practice applying alternatives to saying ‘no’ to a situation you are facing now, or have faced in the past. Give an example of a situation where you need to say, “No”:

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Give 2-3 alternative responses:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Apply What You Have Learned:

Based on the information provided, what can you do to improve your boundaries?

Test your understanding:

What is the main point of this assignment?

Why were you expected to do this exercise?

What type of person would need to do this exercise?

How well do you fit the profile of the person for whom this assignment was created?

Reflection: *(Write down your response after completing this assignment.)*

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Answers to “Ways to handle the rest of the world.” & Boundaries:

1. Agree with living mates about study time
2. Get off the phone
3. Learn to say “no”
4. Hang a “do not disturb” sign on your door
5. Manage interruptions

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