

charis

A Care and Counseling Initiative



Boundaries in Relationships

maintaining healthy boundaries and navigating challenges



Charis is an Urban Alliance initiative. www.urbanalliance.com

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About Charis

Through Charis, Urban Alliance works with churches and parachurch organizations to help them communicate about mental health in ways that offer hope and create safe environments where people feel comfortable seeking help.

Many people who are struggling with their relational, emotional and mental health do not receive the support they need. They often do not know where to turn for help, or are embarrassed to acknowledge they are struggling. Additionally, a lack of resources in the community, poverty and stigma are barriers that keep people from receiving help.

Research shows that the church is one of the most common places people go to seek help when they are struggling emotionally. This is why it is so important for pastors and care providers to be equipped to offer care and connect people to appropriate help. Many churches offer support groups, care ministries or pastoral care. And, professional counselors who offer care from a Christian perspective provide services in the community.

Through Charis, Urban Alliance works with churches and organizations to help them communicate about mental health in ways that offer hope and create safe environments where people feel comfortable seeking help. Urban Alliance also equips care providers to respond sensitively, effectively connect people who are seeking care to appropriate support, and provide care, so they may cope well and heal.

The Charis website is a tool, managed by Urban Alliance, that can be used by individuals and organizations to help connect people in need of support to high-quality professional counselors, support groups and specialized support services offered from a Christian perspective.

These collaborative efforts have helped hundreds of people overcome barriers and more effectively cope, have ongoing support, strengthen their relationships, experience hope, joy and peace, and persevere despite life's challenges.

To learn more about Charis, visit www.urbanalliance.com/charis.
To visit the Charis website, visit www.charisnetworkct.org.

About Boundaries

Maintaining healthy boundaries in relationships is a way we can honor each other. Boundaries mark where one thing ends, and another begins. Physical boundaries, such as property lines, lawns, fences, and even skin, show where a person’s personal property begins. These physical property lines indicate whose property it is and who is responsible for maintaining it. In life, not all boundaries are physical. There are boundaries in relationships, internal boundaries around our thoughts and emotions, and boundaries that must be expressed in decision-making.

In the book *Boundaries*, Dr. Henry Cloud defines the following qualities of boundaries:

Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A strong sense of self empowers a person to know himself or herself, and make and take responsibility for life choices. A strong sense of self also frees us from feeling responsible for other people and trying to control them.

Boundaries remind us that we are responsible both to others and for ourselves. Galatians 6:2 says, “carry each other’s burdens and in this way you fulfill the law of Christ.” This verse shows that we are responsible to help one another. Galatians 6:5 says, “each one should carry their own load.” Each person should take ownership of aspects of life that are their own load. The Greek word for burdens means “excess burden” or burdens that are heavy and weigh us down. The word for load means “the burden of daily toil” or everyday things we all need to do. People experience boundary challenges when they do not allow others to help with “excess burdens” and are overwhelmed, or when they expect others to carry their “loads” and cause others to become overwhelmed.



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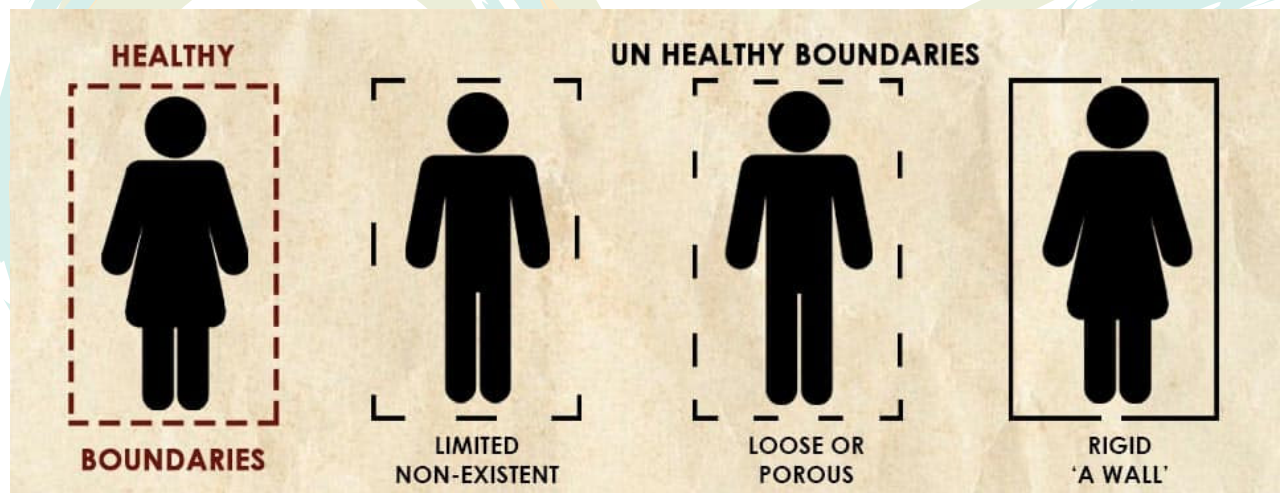
Boundaries help us determine our property lines so we can take care of our own property. We are responsible for things that fall within our boundaries. These include how we express our emotions; attitudes and beliefs; actions and behaviors; the choices we make and their consequences; personal values; the limits we set; how we use resources and gifts; thoughts and desires; and giving and responding to love. Boundaries also help us see another person's property line so we can make wise choices about when to say "yes" and when to say "no" to other people's requests for our time, talents, and resources.

The concept of boundaries came from the very nature of God. God defines Himself as a separate being and tells us what He thinks, feels, plans, allows, likes, and dislikes. He has boundaries within the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one, yet have distinct personalities with their own boundaries. God sets boundaries with sin and allows consequences for behavior. God guards His kingdom and will not allow evil things in, yet He allows us to enter by receiving His grace and mercy.

People experience boundary challenges when they do not allow others to help with "excess burdens" and are overwhelmed, or when they expect others to carry their "loads" and cause others to become overwhelmed.



Examples of Unhealthy Boundaries (too rigid, too porous or non-existent)	Examples of Healthy Boundaries (healthy and flexible)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling all or oversharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing more vulnerably as trust is built
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trusting no one or trusting everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate trust which is built over time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View of self, identity, and choices strongly influenced by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong sense of self, identity, and able to make choices regardless of other people's views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to receive feedback or be influenced by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to receive feedback and be appropriately influenced by mentors and trusted friends
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not noticing when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noticing when boundaries are crossed and working to reestablish them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going against personal values or rights to please another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting congruent with personal values regardless of other people's opinions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Touching a person without asking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking permission before touching, and honoring their preference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking too much 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in back and forth dialogue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believing others can anticipate your needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for what you need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addictive, impulsive, or compulsive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to control behavior and impulses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-way relationships characterized by "giving" or "taking" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in reciprocal relationships characterized by both give and take
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needing to be the center of attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance focusing on others and sharing about yourself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expecting others to take responsibility for your actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking responsibility for actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over or under-influenced by others' emotions, not able to function well when another experiences distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empathic when others struggle, but able to maintain healthy emotional boundaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distraction from personal goals; either avoidance or over-focusing on others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staying focused on personal goals and growth



Differentiation of Self

According to Bowen, “self-differentiation” refers to a person’s ability to differentiate thoughts and feelings and maintain a sense of self when in relationship with others, including people whose views may differ from their own.

People with a **poorly-differentiated self** depend on the acceptance and approval of others and quickly adjust what they think, say, and do to please others. They may also become dogmatic in their opinions and convictions and demand that others come into agreement. Disagreement can be very threatening.

A **well-differentiated self** is able to be interdependent in relationships. When faced with criticism, rejection, or conflict, they are able to remain level headed, assess the facts, draw a conclusion about the situation, and respond in a healthy and equitable way.

Another way to think about differentiation is in terms of boundaries. A person who is well-differentiated has healthy internal boundaries (a strong sense of self, healthy identity, awareness of emotions, the ability to regulate emotions), which allows them to have healthy boundaries in relationships (ability to tolerate conflict, healthy influence, sense of self and other).



Examples of a Poorly-Differentiated Self

- **Rebel:** forms opinions solely in opposition to another person’s (i.e. a young adult holds personal convictions to oppose their parent’s conservative values)
- **People Pleaser:** Waver in their feelings and thoughts in fear of hurting others or being rejected or shamed by them (i.e. a person pretends to agree with others at their church because they fear other’s will think less of them if they share their honest opinion)
- **Bully:** Demands that others have the same opinions and protests strongly when they do not (i.e. a leader at a church demands that his entire congregation have the same opinion on an issue and is condemning of those who do not agree)
- **Enmeshed:** Have a difficult time distinguishing between their emotions and other people’s emotions and can lost their “self” in relationships (ie. They are upset if other people are upset, and okay when others are okay)

10 Laws of Boundaries

Healthy emotional and relational boundaries are key to having successful relationships and dealing with life well. The following Ten Laws of Boundaries provide principles for learning and applying healthy boundaries. These are taken from Dr. Henry Cloud's book, *Boundaries*.



- 1. The Law of Sowing and Reaping:**
Our actions have consequences
- 2. The Law of Responsibility:**
We are responsible to each other, but not for each other
- 3. The Law of Power:**
We have power over some things, but we don't have power over others (including changing people)
- 4. The Law of Respect:**
If we wish for others to respect our boundaries, we need to respect theirs
- 5. The Law of Motivation:**
We must be free to say no before we can whole-heartedly say yes
- 6. The Law of Evaluation:**
We need to evaluate the pain our boundaries cause others
- 7. The Law of Proactivity:**
We take action to solve problems based on our values, wants, and needs
- 8. The Law of Envy:**
We will never get what we want if we focus outside our boundaries on what others have
- 9. The Law of Activity:**
We need to take the initiative in setting limits rather than being passive
- 10. The Law of Exposure:**
We need to communicate our boundaries to each other

Each of these laws reflect spiritual realities that God has woven into life. As a person learns and operates according to them, they will experience life and relationships differently.

Boundary Problems

Boundaries help us keep the good in and the bad out by using wisdom to say “yes” and “no” to the right things. Setting boundaries inevitably involves taking responsibility for choices. With every “yes” or “no” there are consequences and trade-offs. Many boundary problems stem from a person’s struggle to say “yes” or “no” or struggle to hear “yes” or “no”.

Table 1. Boundary Problems

		Can't Say	Can't Hear
No		The Compliant: Feels guilty and/or controlled by others; cannot set boundaries	The Controller: Aggressively or manipulatively violates the boundaries of others
Yes		The Nonresponsive: Set's boundaries against responsibility to love or take action	The Avoidant: Sets boundaries against receiving the care of others

Examples:

- **The Compliant:** Mary struggles to say no to her ministry leader when asked for additional help at their food pantry, even though it will mean less time with her family.
- **The Controller:** John knows his friend is likely to set a boundary and not allow him to borrow money, so he uses guilt and manipulation to try to get his way.
- **The Nonresponsive:** Jeremiah sees that his brother is struggling to move to a new home and, although he is able to help, he chooses to ignore the situation because he simply does not feel like putting in the effort.
- **The Avoidant:** Juliet feels good about herself when she helps others. She is the primary caregiver for her elderly mother and serves as a care minister at her church. She does not share her struggles with others and struggles to receive help or support for herself.

More Extreme Boundary Challenges

Codependents and Narcissists

Codependents have lost their connection to their innate self. Instead, their thinking and behavior revolve around a person, substance, or process.

Narcissists also suffer from a lack of connection to their true self. In its place, they identify with their ideal self. Their inner deprivation and lack of connection to their real self make them dependent on others for validation.

Codependents (giver)

Everyone is better than me and I am not good enough.

I don't expect to be treated well although I treat others well.

I will struggle to set boundaries and think it is my fault that you exploit me.

Narcissists (taker)

People are below me. I am superior on all levels.

I am entitled to be treated better than others.

I will violate your boundaries and exploit you on every level, then blame you for doing so.

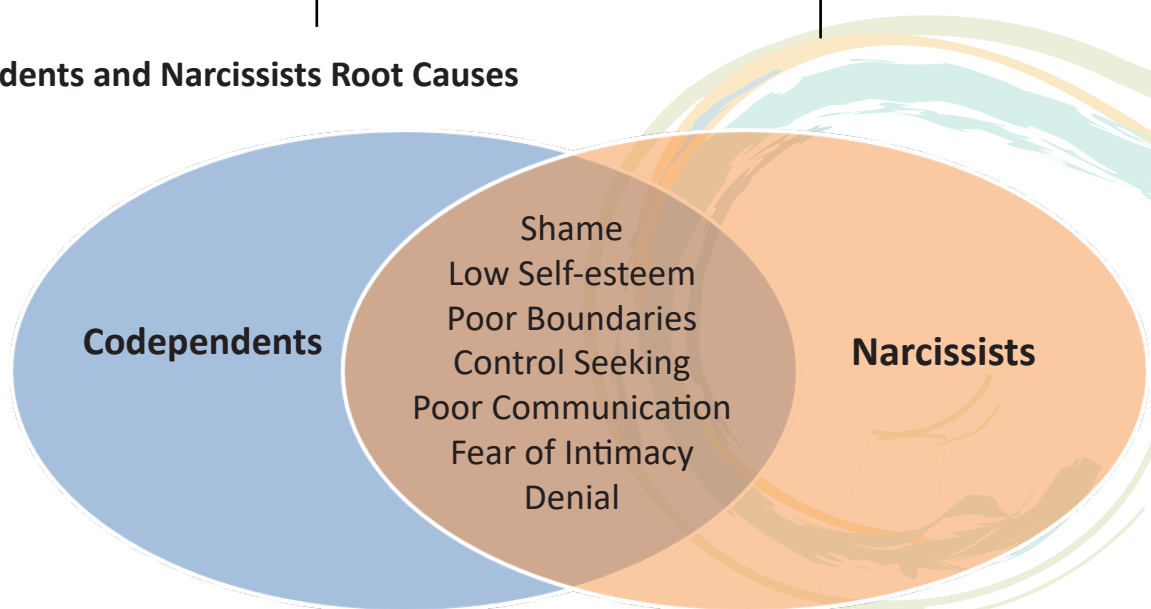
Healthy (reciprocal)

I am not perfect and that's okay, nobody is. I can learn and grow.

I respect myself and others and expect to be respected in return.

I will set boundaries if my kindness is exploited and not feel guilty for doing so.

Codependents and Narcissists Root Causes



Understanding Codependency

The term “codependent” was originally coined by Melody Beattie and described in her book, *Codependent No More*. This relationship pattern was first observed in relationships where one partner struggled with addiction and the other enabled the unhealthy behavior through caregiving and not setting firm boundaries.

Codependency can be described as a circular relationship pattern in which one person needs the other person who, in turn, needs to be needed. The codependent person, known as “the giver,” feels worthless unless they are needed by, and are making sacrifices for, the enabler, otherwise known as “the taker”.

Healthy adult relationships are reciprocal. Both people receive and give love and support. Codependent relationships are one-sided where one person remains in the role of “giver” and the other in the role of “taker”.

- **The Giver:** caring, highly functional, and helpful, to the extreme of supporting, perpetuating, or “enabling” a loved one’s irresponsible or destructive behavior and sacrificing their own well-being
- **The Taker:** often has a significant struggle, such as addiction, and becomes dependent on “the giver” to meet needs

“Codependency can be described as a circular relationship pattern in which one person needs the other person, who in turn, needs to be needed.”



According to Dr. Shawn Burn, the following six qualities describe a person struggling with co-dependency:

- Has an excessive and unhealthy tendency to rescue and take responsibility for other people
- Derives a sense of purpose and boosts self-esteem through extreme self-sacrifice to satisfy the needs of others
- Chooses to enter and stay in lengthy high-cost caretaking and rescuing relationships, despite the costs to you or others
- Seems to attract low-functioning people looking for someone to take care of them so they can avoid adult responsibility or consequences, or attracts people in perpetual crisis unwilling to change their lives
- Has a pattern of engaging in well-intentioned, but ultimately unproductive and unhealthy, helping behaviors, such as enabling

For some people this pattern can be seen across various relationships and for others it is characteristic of a single significant relationship. Over the last decade, the term codependency has been expanded and applied to a variety of different types of relationships, including parent-child, friendships, family members, and worker and ministry relationships.

Examples of relationships with codependency:

Parent-child: A mother is constantly saving her adult son from the consequences of his poor choices. He recently quit his job because he did not want to wake up early for work and then got a speeding ticket he could not pay. The mother quickly gave him the money and begged that he start working again. He has a pattern of not working and the mother has a pattern of giving him money whenever he asks.

Husband-wife: John has been married to Jane for 20 years. She has struggled with addiction to alcohol and painkillers for most of their marriage. John works to provide for his family and maintains the household as well. Jane does not work, and spends most of her days watching TV, talking to friends, and drinking. When John addresses her addiction, she goes into a rage and accuses him of being insensitive. John has set boundaries verbally, but does not follow-through because he is scared of making Jane upset.

Friend-friend: Melissa has been helping her friend Lisa who is struggling with depression. She spends hours each evening offering emotional support over the phone, lending money, and helping her run errands. Melissa feels good about herself when she helps and struggles to set boundaries. Lisa is not seeking help for her depression and has a pattern of emotional dependency in relationships.

Helping People Develop Healthy Patterns

Helping people to adopt practices that support healthy boundaries can seem simple on the surface. For some people it is a matter of education, self-awareness, and building in new disciplines. The following steps can help people make wise decisions that reflect healthy boundaries. Discipleship relationships can offer support and accountability to help build new patterns in decision-making and relationships.

Steps for Decision Making

1. **Know your patterns.** Start by growing in your self-awareness of your patterns. Do you struggle to say “yes” or “no”? Do you struggle to hear “yes” or “no”?
2. **Dig a little deeper.** Explore where those patterns came from and how they are currently affecting you. What beliefs, hurts, experiences, etc. contributed to those patterns?
3. **Define your priorities.** Make sure to start with clarity around your own personal priorities. Ask the Lord to clarify your priorities. As you are making decisions, it is important to guard your priorities by ensuring your time, energy, and resources are allotted to them first.
4. **Consider costs and benefits of “yes” versus “no.”** There is a cost and benefit to every decision. Consider how the costs and benefits align with your God given priorities.
5. **Assess your personal capacity.** Each person has a capacity limit to their time, resources, and energy. Giving too much to one area means another suffers. Make sure to consider capacity as you weigh the pros and cons.
6. **Make a decision and pause.** Decide what you think you should do and pause. Pray, consider if this decision is consistent with unhealthy boundary patterns, and ask a trusted friend for counsel.
7. **Share your decision.** Finally, it is time to share your decision with others and take action. You may need emotional support if you are working to break free from an unhealthy pattern.



*“Whenever you say
yes to something,
there is less of you for
something else. Make
sure your yes is worth
the less.”*

Lysa Terkeurst

Another dimension of boundaries involves relationships between people. The following questions can be applied to any relationship to assess the degree to which the relationship reflects healthy interpersonal boundaries.

Questions to Consider in Relationships

1. **Is there reciprocity?** Over time, do we both give and take? Or is there a pattern of one person consistently helping the other?
2. **Have we allowed trust to build over time?** Have we allowed trust to build through experience? Did we overshare early on? Or under-share despite positive healthy interactions over time?
3. **Are interactions consistently kind and respectful?** Do we consistently honor one another in our interactions by maintaining confidentiality, being patient, respectful, kind, and honest?
4. **Does each person take responsibility for their actions?** If someone makes a mistake, do they acknowledge it? Do they apologize and ask for forgiveness if their actions hurt the other person intentionally or unintentionally?
5. **Is there honest communication?** Can each person honestly communicate his or her thoughts, feelings, and needs? Or does one person hold back? If so, why?
6. **Is there collaboration?** When important decisions need to be made is there a collaborative process that takes each person's opinion, perspective, and needs into consideration?
7. **Does each person have a healthy sense of self?** Do both people have a strong sense of their own values, preferences, beliefs, and identity. Is each person comfortable when the other agrees or disagrees with their opinion or preference?
8. **Are there healthy emotional boundaries?** Does each person express empathy for the other? When one is struggling does the other care and express a desire to help? Are they overly influenced or overwhelmed by the other's emotions to the point where it interferes with their functioning? Are they indifferent to each other's struggles?



*“We must not confuse
the command to love
with the disease to
please.”*

Lysa TerKeurst

Dig a Little Deeper

Often struggles with healthy boundaries are deeply rooted. A person may need to dig deep, process past experiences, and speak with a pastor, wise friend, or counselor to adopt new patterns.

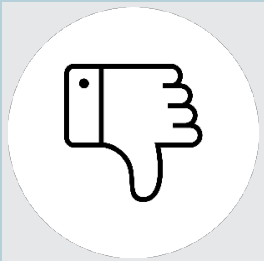

Attachment Relationships. Co-dependency and other serious relational struggles are often rooted in early relationships with caregivers. Early relationship patterns often set the stage for later struggles. For example, in families where a child cares for a parent with mental illness, that child may come to believe their needs are not important and that their worth is based on their ability to help others. Read Urban Alliance’s booklet, “Understanding Attachment Relationship: increasing attachment security with God and others” to better understand attachment relationships and for strategies to heal and adopt healthy patterns.

Trauma. A traumatic event is any event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Traumatic events at any life stage can change a person’s boundaries as they try to maintain a sense of safety and control. In some cases, trauma makes the person feel unsafe and they respond by forming boundaries that are too firm to keep people at a distance. In other situations, a trauma may have distorted their sense of worth, and they may adopt boundaries that are too loose and struggle to say “no” or make choices that reflect their needs. When trauma is the source of the boundary struggle, counseling models such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Internal Family Systems (IFS), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), or Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) may be helpful.



Unhealthy Beliefs. Early attachment relationships, trauma, and painful experiences can all cause a person to adopt unhealthy beliefs about themselves, others, and the world. These can affect a person’s ability to maintain healthy boundaries. The table below highlights beliefs that are commonly associated with each of the four types of boundary problems.

Table 2. Boundary Problems and Beliefs

	Can’t Say	Can’t Hear
<p>No</p> 	<p>The Compliant: Feels guilty and/or controlled by others; cannot set boundaries</p> <p><u>Unhealthy Beliefs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I cannot bear rejection or disapproval • I have worth when others are pleased with me • I am worthless when others are upset with me 	<p>The Controller: Aggressively or manipulatively violates the boundaries of others</p> <p><u>Unhealthy Beliefs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My needs are most important • I have to be in control (or deeply fear feeling out of control) • I can’t take care of myself
<p>Yes</p> 	<p>The Nonresponsive: Set’s boundaries against responsibility to love or take action</p> <p><u>Unhealthy Beliefs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships are not that important • I am incompetent; I am a failure • My problems are not my fault • Fear of commitment 	<p>The Avoidant: Sets boundaries against receiving the care of others</p> <p><u>Unhealthy Beliefs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have worth when I help other people • My needs are not important • I do not deserve good things- Fear of intimacy or receiving from others

To learn more about breaking patterns of unhealthy thinking read Urban Alliance’s booklet, “Chasing Truth and Taking Thoughts Captive: A Counseling Model for Renewing our Minds”. Professional counselors can help people identify unhealthy thinking patterns and replace them with new ones. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a counseling approach that is very helpful when unhealthy thought patterns or beliefs contribute to boundary struggles.

Spiritual Strongholds: People are comprised of mind, body, and spirit, so it is not surprising that there is a spiritual element involved in setting healthy boundaries. A spiritual stronghold can be defined as a habitual pattern of thinking or behaving that opens the door for Satan to attack or have influence. Sometimes a person is stuck in a pattern and to break free they need to address the behavior, thoughts, emotions, as well as spiritual matters. This may involve:

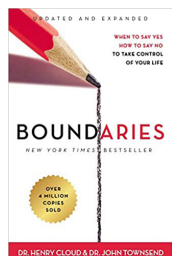
1. Confessing sin
2. Forgiving people who contributed to the struggle
3. Inviting Jesus to heal hurts
4. Replacing ungodly beliefs with truth
5. Standing in the authority we have in Jesus over spiritual attacks

Freedom Tools is a resource that can help people to address the spiritual component of boundary challenges as well as other life struggles.

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”
(Galatians 5:1)*



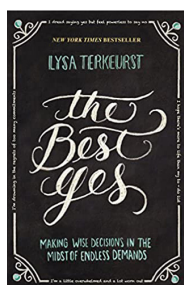
Helpful Resources



Henry Cloud & John Townsend

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No To Take Control of Your Life

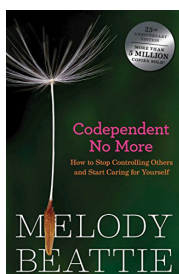
Does your life feel like it's out of control? Perhaps you feel like you have to say yes to everyone's requests. Maybe you find yourself readily taking responsibility for others' feelings and problems. Or perhaps you focus so much on being loving and unselfish that you've forgotten your own limits and limitations. Or maybe it's all of the above. In the New York Times bestseller, *Boundaries*, Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend help you learn when to say yes and know how to say no in order to take control of your life and set healthy, biblical boundaries with your spouse, children, friends, parents, co-workers, and even yourself.



Lysa TerKeurst

The Best Yes: Making Wise Decisions in the Midst of Endless Demands

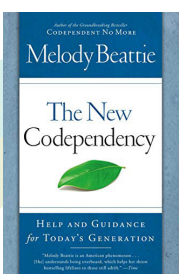
In *The Best Yes*, New York Times bestselling author Lysa TerKeurst guides you through the insightful lessons she's learned about what it means to live out the purpose that God has in store for you. Lysa demonstrates the incredible power of two words--yes and no--and the way that these simple, daily decisions can shape the story of our lives. Lysa has learned firsthand that there's a big difference between saying yes to everyone and saying yes to God. Drawing from applicable scriptures and her own personal experiences, Lysa teaches us that if we know and believe that God has a plan for each of us, we'll live it out--serving as living proof of His never-ending grace and kindness.



Melody Beattie

Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself

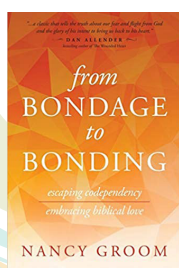
The healing touchstone of millions, this modern classic by one of America's best-loved and most inspirational authors holds the key to understanding codependency and to unlocking its stultifying hold on your life. Is someone else's problem your problem? If, like so many others, you've lost sight of your own life in the drama of tending to someone else's, you may be codependent--and you may find yourself in this book--*Codependent No More*. The healing touchstone of millions, this modern classic by one of America's best-loved and most inspirational authors holds the key to understanding codependency and to unlocking its stultifying hold on your life.



Melody Beattie

The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generation

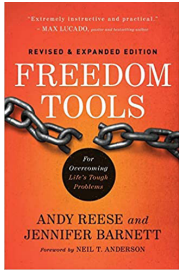
In *Codependent No More*, Melody Beattie introduced the world to the term codependency. Now a modern classic, this book established Beattie as a pioneer in self-help literature and endeared her to millions of readers who longed for healthier relationships. Twenty-five years later concepts such as self-care and setting boundaries have become entrenched in mainstream culture. Now Beattie has written a followup volume, *The New Codependency*, which clears up misconceptions about codependency, identifies how codependent behavior has changed, and provides a new generation with a road map to wellness.



Nancy Groom

From Bondage to Bonding: Escaping Codependency, Embracing Biblical Love

In this thorough, nontechnical guide to assessment of and recovery from codependency, author Nancy Groom takes you beyond simply escaping codependency to helping you tackle the tough questions you'll face as you emerge from destructive relationships. Men and women who are dealing with grief, anger, and feelings of shame from codependency will learn how to bond to God.



Andy Reese & Jennifer Barnett
Freedom Tools: For Overcoming Life's Tough Problems

How many times in everyday conversation do we struggle to comfort others in a troubled world? Christians should be “first responders,” say Andy Reese and Jennifer Barnett, yet we lack the tools and confidence to reach out. We end up frustrated by our own inability to connect meaningfully and make a difference.

In these pages Andy and Jennifer give you the practical understanding and simple tools to do just that. You can fill even your casual conversations with the gentle yet transforming power of Jesus Christ. Here is what you need to confidently step out to bring peace, give grace and help others experience renewal.

Differentiation of Self Inventory

Below are questions concerning your thoughts and feelings about yourself and relationships with others. They are divided into four categories and each category will receive a score.

Please read each statement carefully and decide how much the statement is generally true of you on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 6 (very). If you believe an item does not pertain to you, please answer according to your best guess about what your thoughts or feelings would be in the situation.

I Position Scale	Not at all true of me					Very true of me
1. I tend to remain pretty calm, even under stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. No matter what happens in my life, I know I'll never lose my sense of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I usually do not change my behavior simply to please other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. When I am having an argument with someone, I can separate my thoughts about the issue with my feelings about the person.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. There is no point in getting upset about things I cannot change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I am fairly self-accepting.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I am able to say no to others, even when I feel pressured by them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I am less concerned about others approval of me, than I am about doing what is right.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. My self-esteem really depends on how others think of me.	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. I usually do what I think is right regardless of what others say.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I tend to feel pretty stable under stress.	1	2	3	4	5	6

I Position SUM = _____ (range 11-66) – Higher scores indicate being well differentiated.

I Position: Higher scores on this scale are predictive of a healthy and stable sense of self. I Position is related to the ability to maintain a clearly defined sense of self and thoughtfully adhering to personal convictions when pressured by others to do otherwise.

Emotional Reactivity Scale	Not at all true of me					Very true of me
1. People have remarked that I'm overly emotional.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. When someone close to me disappoints me, I withdraw from him/her for a time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I wish that I weren't so emotional.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. At times my feelings get the best of me, and I have trouble thinking clearly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. At times I feel as if I'm riding an emotional roller coaster.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I'm overly sensitive to criticism.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. If I have had an argument with my spouse or partner, I tend to think about it all day.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. If someone is upset with me, I can't seem to let it go.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I'm very sensitive to being hurt by others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I often wonder about the kind of impression I create.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Emotional Reactivity SUM = _____ (range 10-60) - Higher scores indicate being poorly differentiated.

Emotional Reactivity: Higher scores indicate that a person struggles with emotional reactivity or remaining calm in response to the emotionality of others. They tend to have strong emotional reactions, have a difficult time calming afterwards, and have a difficult time with the strong emotional reactions of others.

Emotional Cut-off Scale	Not at all true of me					Very true of me
1. I have difficulty expressing my feelings to people I care for.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I often feel inhibited by my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I tend to distance myself when people get too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. My spouse or partner could not tolerate it if I expressed my true feelings about something.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I'm often uncomfortable when people get too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I'm concerned about losing my independence in intimate relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I often feel that my spouse or partner wants too much from me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. When one of my relationships becomes very intense, I feel the urge to run away from it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I would never consider turning to any of my family members for emotional support.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. When I'm with my spouse or partner, I often feel smothered.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. When things go wrong, talking about them often makes it worse.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Our relationship would be better if my spouse would give me the space I need.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Emotional Cut-off SUM = _____ (range 12-72) - Higher scores indicate being poorly differentiated.

Emotional Cut-off: Emotional cut-off indicates that a person has a tendency to distance emotionally when overwhelmed. They often appear aloof and isolated from others, tend to deny the importance of family, often boasts of his or her emancipation from parents, and displays an exaggerated facade of independence

Fused Scale	Not at all true of me					Very true of me
1. I'm likely to smooth over or settle conflicts between two people I care about.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. It has been said (or could be said) that I am very attached to my parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Whenever there is a problem in my relationship, I'm anxious to get it settled right away.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. It is important for me to keep in touch with my parents regularly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. When my spouse or partner is away for too long, I feel like I am missing a part of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I try to live up to my parents' expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Arguments with my spouse or siblings make me feel awful.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I find myself thinking a lot about my relationship with my spouse or partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I worry about people close to me getting sick, hurt, or upset.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Fused SUM = _____ (range 8-48) - Higher scores indicate being poorly differentiated.

Fused: The fused person tends to experience separation as overwhelming, remains emotionally "stuck" in the position they occupied in their families of origin, has few firmly held convictions and beliefs, is either dogmatic or compliant, and seeks acceptance and approval above all other goals.

**Lower scores on the emotional reactivity, emotional cut-off, and fused scales, and a greater ability to take an "I position", predicts lower chronic anxiety, better psychological adjustment, and greater marital satisfaction.*

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