



Common Boundary Myths



Henry Cloud and John Townsend wrote *Boundaries: When to Say YES, When to Say NO, to Take Control of Your Life*. They identified the following all-too common myths:

1. *If I set boundaries, I'm being selfish.* No, appropriate boundaries actually increase our ability to take care of others. "Selfish" fixates on our own desires; "stewardship" acknowledges our responsibility to manage the life entrusted to our care.
2. *Boundaries are a sign of disobedience.* No, people without boundaries are compliant on the outside, and resentful on the inside. We can be honest and tell the truth.
3. *If I begin setting boundaries, I will be hurt by others.* Perhaps, since you cannot control the reactions of others. When you set a boundary, others may attack or withdraw. We have no right to control their reaction. Our responsibility is to control our own lives.
4. *If I set boundaries, I will hurt others.* No, boundaries are not an offensive weapon, they're defensive tools. They do no harm, they just protect the treasures of their owner.
5. *Boundaries mean that I am angry.* No, anger is an early warning system that something is wrong, and helps us move forward to solve problems. Boundaries decrease anger.
6. *When others set boundaries, it injures me.* No, lack of boundaries hurts people, especially in childhood. The Golden Rule helps us respect each others boundaries.
7. *Boundaries cause feelings of guilt.* No, feeling an obligation to others may make us give in to avoid feeling guilty. We can be grateful for gifts received, without thinking we owe some nonexistent debt in return.
8. *Boundaries are permanent, and I'm afraid of burning my bridges.* No, "it's a woman's prerogative to change her mind," the old saying asserts (and men, too)! You own your boundaries and you can change them.

On the starship Enterprise, they had a boundary, a force field to shield them from torpedoes. It was a flexible tool that could be expanded or pulled back, opened for friends, or put all on the main side of an attack. Our boundaries can be the same flexible tools.