Family Boundaries and Communication

Thelma Razo, LSW
What are family boundaries?
Effective Boundaries

- Communication
- Engagement on both sides
- Autonomy
- Respect
- Trust
- Honest
- Able to enjoy time alone or with others outside family members
- Knowing that your needs and feelings are just as important as the needs and feelings of others

Ineffective Boundaries

- Rigid, non-negotiable
- Not communicating
- Disrespectful
- Not trusting
- Dishonest
- Trying to take control
- Feeling like you are responsible for “fixing” or “saving” others
- Only spending time together
**Enmeshed:** not enough space, feeling smothered, no autonomy, can’t differentiate between own emotions and others’ emotions

**Healthy Balance**

**Disengaged:** under involvement, not aware of each others’ needs and emotions, rigid boundaries
How to develop boundaries?

Recognize that you have the right to set boundaries
“Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.”

-Brene Brown
Define your needs, wants, limits, and expectations

- What do you need from this relationship?
- What do you want from this relationship?
- What are your limits in this relationship?
- What do you expect from others in certain situations?
20 QUESTION SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Dr. Jane Bolton, PsyD, LMFT

1. Do you feel stressed out, overwhelmed, burnt out?
2. Would you do most anything to avoid hurting others?
3. Do you feel as if your kids (mate, parents, others) run your life?
4. Do you feel as if you are never caught up, or as if your life is not your own?
5. Do you feel taken advantage of by those you love?
6. Do you resent others for being so demanding and inconsiderate?
7. Do others’ needs seem much more urgent than yours?
8. Do you see yourself as the only one who can help, and that you therefore should say yes?
9. Do you tend to meet others’ needs before your own?
10. Do you question the legitimacy of your own needs?
11. Do you hate to disappoint others’ expectations?
12. Are you secretly afraid that if you don’t do what others ask of you, that they will leave you?
13. Do you say “OK” or say nothing when you would rather not do something for someone, because you don’t want a confrontation?
14. Do you deep down believe that if you don’t anticipate people’s needs and provide services for them, they won’t want to be with you?
15. Are you very distressed if one disapproves of you?
16. Are you very distressed if someone seems as if they don’t like you?
17. If someone criticizes you, do you automatically believe that their criticism is true?
18. Do you let other people define what your behavior means? (Ex: “You don’t really love me if you won’t...”)
Avoid Assumption Making
Communication

- Start small
- Communicate calmly, clearly, and consistently
- Emotional Awareness
- “I” statements
- Observe instead of interpret
- Make time to check-in with one another
Ineffective Communication

- Avoid important discussions when stressed or frustrated
- Thinking what to say next
- Judging what the other person says
- Blaming and shaming
- Avoid deflection
Active Listening

- Give your attention only to the person and the conversation
- Listen without judgment
- Listen, do not start thinking about what you want to say
- Use non-verbal language
- Be patient
- Ask questions
- Ask for clarification if needed
What to do when boundaries have not been respected?

- Restating your boundaries/expectations
- Explaining how you feel using “I” language
- Walking away for some time; taking time to choose your response
- Implementing consequences of the broken boundary
Provide Positive Feedback
Family Therapy
“Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously.” - Prentis Hemphill
Thank you for your time!

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