

Chapter 8 Beautiful Boundaries

Introduction

This chapter may not seem too sexual, but nothing—and I mean nothing—sets you up for great sex more than great communication. When it comes to communication, there is a lot to cover. If this is a subject that you need more support in, I highly suggest reviewing this with your therapist. If you are a client of mine, revisiting the Amazing You program, or scheduling some clarity calls with me through LishaAntiqua.com. For this chapter, I am going to share with you some of the biggest mistakes in communication I have worked through in my own life, and some examples from my clients. Many survivors were raised in home that did not have good communication, or positive boundaries. This means, if you have not worked on building your communication and boundaries before this may be some new information for you. Remember, as you are reprogramming your mind to create more trust and freedom in your life. You are learning new ways of being, be gentle on yourself. I will also share a few clarity and awareness techniques that will help you form more intimacy with your partner, as well as more trust in yourself.

In the last chapter, you got clear on your hard no's. Now it is time to discover the art of positive boundaries so you can honor yourself and your inner child, thus allowing you to continue to form deeper intimate relationships.

What Is a Boundary?

According to Webster's dictionary online, a boundary is a limit of a subject or sphere of activity, a line that marks the limits of an area, a dividing line.

Often times, my clients tell me that someone or something crossed their boundary and then tell me a story like the following: "My husband knows that I don't like anyone in the kitchen with me when I am cooking dinner, but he insists on walking in and out every day."

This is not a boundary but a request. It is not a boundary until you have control of the outcome.

In this situation, to make it a boundary, it would look more like this:

"I told my husband that I did not like anyone coming into the kitchen when I am cooking. It causes me anxiety and I get all shaky if there is a lot going on. So, to protect myself, if anyone steps in the kitchen when I am cooking, I will not cook for a week."

In this example, the wife will respect her own boundary and not cook for a week. And the request is the same even if the request is not met.

The first creates frustration and the request is more like a demand or a control tactic. The second says the same but gives the wife's reason for setting the boundary (this helps others understand and respect your boundary) and then states her response if this request isn't honored.

When setting a boundary and communicating it, first be clear on your request, and your response if this request is crossed. In all communication, make sure that the response is 100% in your control and not dependent on anyone else's reaction or involvement.

Holding your boundaries is much easier when you are the only one who you must control. If you have been a chronic people-pleaser then this muscle may need some strengthening. Start small and follow through. This will build your self-esteem and your self-trust over time, and both will impact your relationships positively.

The biggest misunderstanding my clients have about boundaries is that the boundary is for someone or something else. This is the furthest thing from the truth. The most effective and secure boundaries are about you. Just think about a great wall or mote dividing an old castle from intruders—yes, the wall/mote kept people out, as it clearly marked the trespassing zone. More importantly, however, they were designed to keep the people within their walls safe. The same goes with your boundaries: Clarity and good communication will provide a mote or a wall your relationships should not cross, but if they do, you will have time to react, to find safety, and to honor yourself.

How to Determine Where to Put Your Boundaries and How to React When They Are Crossed

In regard to sex (although you can use this formula for any subject in your life):

What are you tolerating in your sex life?

Can you accept any of these tolerations?

Where is the “too much” limit you will tolerate this behavior or situation and where is your boundary around it?

What is the action you will take if this boundary or limit is crossed?

What do you require in your sex life?

What action will you take if this requirement is not met?

Your boundaries lay right between what you are tolerating and what you require. Once you get to a place of toleration you have two options: accept what is or change it. In order to change, it is important to find clarity within yourself around what you require, and to do so before taking the request to your partner. Your hard no's are simply that they are lines that are not to be crossed, period. Communicating your hard no's to your partner and listening to theirs is very important in creating a safe space for intimacy.

List your Hard-No's:

What are your hard-no's, and chosen actions if they are crossed?

Communication isn't taught in most homes and, in abusive homes, healthy communication, feelings, and response are often dysfunctional at best. If you grew up like me, then rage was a normal form of communication, and boundaries were constantly smashed and crossed, with feelings discounted, and little respect. None of it is healthy for creating a safe environment within which for you to relax and embody your sexual haven.

Before every conversation and for sure especially every client call, I always set an intention. Your intentions are the guidelines for you to hold your boundaries and manage your emotions. In this section, I am going to share a few formulas I have learned and taught over the years, to help you communicate with more ease, freedom, and understanding.

The #1 intention in every conversation is to understand.

You may ask, why not to be understood. To be understood is important, and your clarity about your intention, your desires/requirements and tolerances will help you to be understood, but you are not in control of who understands you; you are only in control of what you understand.

In chapter six, you discovered your likes and dislikes, and that sharing these with your partner can be intimidating if you have not shared them before, but it is especially important to create a safe container because if your partner must guess about what you like, then they may never know how to meet your needs and satisfy you. Great communication will create intimacy and more pleasure for each of you. Sharing your triggers will also your lover to help you heal through them, learning how to ask them if they would be open to being patient with you if and when you have a body-response or memory-response (trigger) to a sexual act will bring more trust and freedom for you to explore new areas of your sexuality. Explain that this will help you to eliminate old fear or pain-based triggers so that, over time, you can create more trust and intimacy with them.

Here are some tips to communicate about sex, so you can use to hold a conversation with your partner, or partner-to-be, without sounding like a needy or controlling victim.

Tips on how to share your likes and dislikes around sex:

#1 – Don't share while having sex; this can seem like criticism and cause distance. Sharing your sexual desires and preferences can be a fun and flirty conversation over a nice meal, or in a bath.

#2 – Set your intention and maybe even create a date night about this conversation topic.

#3 – Be honest with yourself and your partner. If your partner desires something that you cannot do or are not interested in, or vice versa, then talk about a compromise. This may also lead to deeper discussion. For instance, if your partner wants to have sex with other people and you are not interested in that, this may be a situation that in which boundaries are set, or a reason to end the relationship. Knowing what your boundaries are, what you will tolerate and what you require, is top priority when creating safety in your relationship.

#4 - Hard NO's: A "hard no" is a place that you simply won't cross. This may be because of past trauma, relationship values, or personal preferences. If you are not open to your partner having a sexual relationship outside of yours, this is a hard no. If they break this agreement, it is a form of abuse and betrayal. This is a powerful way to recognize and avoid old abuse cycles before they begin again. It is up to you to choose a predetermined consequence if your boundaries are violated. Having predetermined consequences to your hard no's, and discussing them before they happen, will allow you and your partner both to have more freedom and deeper trust in

your partnership. Other common areas are dislikes, spanking, choking, porn, sadomasochism, anal, and other areas that may be triggering or hurtful to you or to them.

How to Understand and Feel Better Understood —Non-Violent Communication—

This formula was originally outlined by Marshal Rosenberg and you can read his work in its entirety in the book Nonviolent Communication (NVC).

One of the keys to all great communication is to take 100% responsibility. This radical responsibility does not mean you are perfect at communication. However, it does mean that you are compassionate with yourself and the person you are communicating with, and that you are responsible for your response, clarity, and asking the right questions so as to be understood fully.

When teaching about NVC, I expand on this it by bringing in somatic (physical body) awareness into your speech that you can use when explaining how you are feeling. This removes the drama, proving, and storytelling from the communication, and helps to express what is really happening so that both parties can work together to form a solution.

The four components of NVC:

- Observations – What was triggering for you ?
- Feelings – Communicate your bodies feelings (rather than story) (use where the feeling is in your body and stick to the six primary emotions that are explained in chapter 3.)
- Needs (What are your desires/intentions or the resolutions you've thought through.)
- Request (What response do you require from your listening partner?)

In an intimate situation, it is important to request that your partner simply listen until you are complete. Once you are complete, ask them to share what they heard from you. Often, we hear one another from a place of fear or judgment, and this is common for most people—especially for survivors of abuse. If they don't understand you yet, simply say, "That is not what I meant," and repeat yourself – then ask them what they heard. When the speaker feels understood, the listener then responds with the same formula.

For example:

Joe and Samantha where having an argument, she didn't feel like he cared for her because he came home and immediately turned on the tv. Joe didn't see what the issue was because he just needed a break after a long day. Both where frustrated.

Samantha – waited till Joe had some time to adjust to being home and then asked for his attention.

“Joe, I miss you all day and look forward to you being home. My intention is to grow closer with you. Do you have 10 minutes for me?”

Joe – “Sure”

Sam- “Like I said I miss you and look forward to you getting home. I know you are tired from work, but my heart sinks and I want to cry when you walk past me and go straight to the tv. I would love a hug and hello kiss before the tv turns on, that would make me feel so loved. What did you hear me say?”

Joe – “ That you are jealous of the tv and I am not giving you attention.”

Sam – “No Joe, that is not what I said. I said I miss you and my heart sinks when you walk past me. It would lift my heart to have a hug and reconnect when you get home is that possible? What did you hear?”

Joe – “That you want a hug when I come in and that will make you happy. Yeah I can do that.”

Sam – “Yes that makes me so happy.” She hugs him.

Intention is clarity. Getting into the habit of asking yourself what your intention is before starting a hard conversation is a formula for success.

Expectation is another big awareness to check in with yourself about. Do you expect the best or worst? Reviewing your attachment style from chapter 7 will help you shift from a negative or fear, anxiety driven expectation and redirect your intentions to a positive expectation. If you expect a conversation to go badly then most likely it will. When you expect someone to act a certain way “because that is how they have always acted” then there is no room for the relationship to change. Understanding what you expect, and expecting the best, will usually help you to create the life and love that you desire. When your expectations go unnoticed, or when you expect the worst, the other shoe to drop, or when you don’t feel safe communicating with the party you are engaging with, then expectation can create frustration in your relationships.

What is your intention for the relationship or conversation?

What is your expectation in the conversation you are intending to have?

Now, with this formula, you are ready to communicate your boundaries:

Expect the best.

Set your intention

Make your request (using NVC formula).

Stay in your feelings.

Ask for understanding and continue to share your tolerances, requirements, intentions, and desires until the person you are communicating with can express your request with understanding. Then do the same for them.

No one responds well to criticism or to being made wrong. Growing up in an environment in which such negative communication was normalized doesn't make it any easier. If you are currently in a relationship in which this style of critical communication is the norm, changing the climate of your home may take time. Be patient with yourself and begin by communicating your desire for better communication—with your partner, and maybe even with your children. At first, for many of my clients—and definitely for myself—this way of communicating felt uncomfortable because I was so used to unconsciously responding or being triggered. Over time you will get better at this form of conscious communication, at feeling, and at expressing your desires.

When your requests go unmet:

If you are in a healthy or healthily growing relationship, give yourself time to master new ways to support, understand, and trust one another. Focus on what is working and your strengths.

When your requests go unmet, during sex or foreplay. Communication during sex or foreplay can be confusing because people sometimes say stop when they don't really mean it. Clear communication about safe words is important to go over with your partner/s.

If, during sex, you say “stop” in a joking or tickling manner, or “don’t stop,” then picking another word safe-word will help you create a safe-haven for your inner child. In order to cease all activity and to truly STOP, I highly suggest that you choose a word that will be respected.

What is your safe word?

When you have survived sexual abuse, it is important to communicate clearly about your known and unknown triggers, and to be open, over time, to hearing your partner’s (or partners’) ideas about how they can hold space for you, support you and help you to move through these triggers.

Before we jump into our next chapter, I will share more about how to manage triggers and other reactivity, both conscious and unconscious. It is important that you understand that most people react to a threat to their well-being through control dramas. A control drama is an unconscious survival reaction to triggers, threats, or upsets. When you activate a control drama, it creates false control, and eventually causes separation and decreased intimacy and trust in your relationships. Beginning to recognize when you are running a “control drama reaction” is a powerful step to creating more intimacy and trust in your relationships.

Control dramas:

The popular book [The Celestine Prophecy](#), by James Redfield, teaches that there are four main ways we try to control situations in our lives, to our detriment. People use these habits to minimize fights, to avoid tender areas, or to circumnavigate relationships. We can have multiple at one time or at various times, or different people can bring out different habits in us. A quick summary of the four habits follows.

Aloof: This person is continually withdrawn, pulling away and wanting the other person to give them all their energy

Interrogator: The person playing such a game has learned to put someone down (sometimes under the disguise of being helpful) to seize control of the relationship, fixing, or being grabby and needy.

Intimidator: The user tries to instill fear and scare another into deferring to their control in the relationship.

Poor Me: The most passive of the four habits. People who use it connect or reconnect with sympathyⁱ

Which control dramas do you see yourself using?

Which control dramas do you see your partner using?

When you run a control drama or you act out in any other way than being fully clear, understanding, and secure, then it is important to rebuild trust and openness. The process of doing that is what I call “a clean-up.”

A clean-up is what we call the action of “cleaning up” any reactivity, upset, emotional vomiting, or triggering; the “cleaner” might “catch themselves in the act” or follow up later, depending on when s/he realizes s/he had gone unconscious and “gotten messy” because of it. Cleaning up takes recognizing one’s mood. If caught on the spot, the cleaner can give the recipient a heads-up to protect their own energy and to not take the mess personally. When following up, the cleaner takes full responsibility retroactively.

You will have triggers and-or issues in every relationship, and at times you may act in unhealthy or reactive ways. It is ok. First [forgive yourself for reverting to old subconscious survival tactics Next, go through and ask yourself powerful questions to find clarity.

- 1) What is your intention for having this conversation? (to be closer, to feel safe, to be understood etc...)
- 2) What are you feeling? (tightness in your stomach, fear, sadness etc.)
- 3) Can you separate from the story, or memory, or reason of what you are feeling, and connect with where your body is holding onto this sensation?

- 4) Start by sharing with the person you are having a clean-up with that you have some things to clean up. Then, through the NVC method, share your intention and what is happening with you.
- 5) Breathe deeply, notice if you begin to pull away emotionally or energetically, or if you expand your energy to control the interaction. Either way, take a deep breath and once again feel into your body, stating your intention and then asking yourself which emotion you are most closely feeling and state your intention.

If you are in an unhealthy relationship or if your partner is not used to this way of communicating, then you may be met with resistance. At that point, it is important, from a calm state of being, to take a break, to collect yourself, and to ask yourself what you are tolerating and what you require.

In the next chapter, we will cover more about what to do when triggers come up and when the energy of an interchange is threatening or overwhelming. I will also share how survivors often form intimate relationships with other survivors and how while, if you and your partner both have a deeper understanding of yourselves, this dynamic can be extremely healthy and very beautiful, it can also be very unhealthy—if one or the other partner refuses to face their past or to accept what was. In this case, you may have to release a relationship that is unhealthy to fully embody your highest version of self and to attract a higher level of intimacy in your life.

ⁱ Celestine-Prophecy-Adventure-James-Redfield <https://www.celestinevision.com/control-dramas>