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“God gives us a Spirit of Power ( Ability ), Love & Self-Discipline ( Control )” 1 Tim 1:7  
“Everything is Possible for Those who Believe” Mark 9:23

**SELF SKILLS – BOUNDARIES**

**GOALS**

Know, Love, & Accept Your Self.

Have A Good Relationship with Your Self.

Learn to Manage Your Boundaries, Nurture a Loving & Honest Attitude, Embrace your Self-Worth & Accept Your Limitations and Weaknesses, and Take Full Ownership of the Life & Personhood God has Created within You.

Think Wisely ≈ Maintain Self-Control & Perspective ≈ Be Reasonable, Effective, Flexible, Adaptive ≈ All in order to Live, Love & Serve Well.

Be More Conscious of Your Choices – You Reap What You Sow - *Daily*.

Let Love, Goodness, Wisdom, Benefit, and Health Motivate your Thinking.

**Boundaries**

Boundaries, influenced by authors Dr’s Henry Cloud & John Townsend, are in a broad sense lines or things that mark a Limit or Border.

In a psychological sense, Boundaries are the realization of your own person apart from others.

This sense of Separateness forms the basis of Personal Identity. It says:

Who You are and Who we are not; What You Will Choose and not Choose;

What You Say *Yes* To & What You Say *No* To;

What You will Endure and won’t Endure; What You will Allow and won’t Allow;

What You Feel and do not Feel; What You Like and do not Like;

What You Want and do not want; What You are For and what You are Against;

What You are Responsible for and not Responsible for;

What You are in Control of and not in Control of.

Boundaries, in short, Define You.

The Functions of a Boundary are to Keep the Good in and the Bad Out; Act as an Alarm System; Help You to Withdraw when necessary; Protect Your Freedom; and Help You to Love & Serve well.

The rest of this article are about what Boundaries entail.

**Attitudes & Beliefs**

First & Foremost Attitudes ( Perspective ) & Beliefs ( Values ) Are A Choice.

You Choose how you want to View Yourself, Others, and Situations Based On Your Value System.

Learn to Love, Understand, Forgive and Accept.

The following regarding Attitude is adapted from The Difference Maker by John Maxwell:

Your Attitude colors every aspect of your life.

It is like the mind's paintbrush.

It can paint everything in bright, vibrant colors – creating a *masterpiece*, or it can make everything dark and dreary.

Attitude is so pervasive and important that it is like this:

It is either humble and sees mutual value or prideful as better than others.

It is the vanguard of your true self. It's root is inward but its fruit is outward.

It is your best friend or worst enemy.

It makes you or breaks you.

It lifts you up or brings you down.

It is more honest and consistent about you than your words.

It is your outward look based on your past experiences.

It is what draws people to you or repels them.

It is never content until it is expressed.

It is the librarian of your past.

It is the speaker of your present.

It is the prophet of your future.

There is not a single part of your current life that is not affected by your attitude.

And your future will definitely be influenced by the attitude you carry with you from today forward.

A great attitude can help you personally.

It can make you more content, more pleasant to be around, more likely to tackle difficult problems.

You can not always choose what happens to you, but you can always choose what happens in you.

*"I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you respond to it."*

Chuck Swindoll

*"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"Sometimes you win and sometimes you learn; you don't lose, you learn."*

Robert Kiyosaki

*"They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."*

Victor Frankl

## **Self-Worth**

Self-Worth is Your God-Given Value & Competence as a Human Being.

Self-Worth is Present within us Longing to be Experienced, Manifested, Acknowledged, and Validated.

Learn to Be Confident to Consider your Thoughts and Feelings in order to make Wise Choices; Develop the *Confidence to Consider your Choices* !!

You Learn to *Embrace* Your Strengths, Gifts & Talents and *Accept* you Weaknesses, Insecurities, and Limits.

We all Manifest Uniquely in Our Personalities.

It's Normal to feel Unsure and Insecure at times; it takes Humility & Strength to Admit Weakness & Insecurity – this does not De-Value Your Self-Worth.

Truth is that we are all Wonderful, Gifted, Limited, & Fallible.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” Nelson Mandela

## **Issues**

We all have past & current Issues and Struggles - some more painful than others.

The Journey of Life is Continuous in Working through your Issues in Order to Grow & Renew; none of us came from the perfect family!!

Remember, what is Unresolved manifests and impacts yourself and others more than you realize; Denial is not just a river in Egypt.

## **Responsibility**

The God Given *Ability to Respond* To Life.

Responsibility leads to Healthy & Appropriate Self-Control, Freedom, Empowerment, Encouragement & Effectiveness, and better *Relating* and *Choice-making* in your life.

Learn To Take Full Responsibility for Your Self, Realizing Your *Thoughts* ( Choices, Beliefs, Attitudes, Values, Meaning, Memories, & Current Issues ) & *Feelings* ARE *Yours Alone*.

No One *Makes* you Feel anything.

Others Can indeed *Cause* you to experience feelings, YET - it's your Responsibility to Manage & Work through them.

*Blaming* only keeps you stuck and perpetuates misery; *Resentment is like swallowing poison hoping the other dies*.

Sometimes what the other said or did can Trigger Wounds you *thought* were healed long ago.

Taking Responsibility does not at all imply that your situation is all your fault or that you are necessarily the prime cause of it.

It means that since you find yourself in it, you are willing to put your arms around it and take ownership to make it better; you are either part of the solution or the problem.

You Learn the difference between what happens to you and what you do with it.

You Learn that it's not the bad things that happen to you that determine your destiny; it's how you respond to them.

You Learn that no one can have control over your life if you do not let them.

In short, you Learn that you own your life, not someone else.

And it is the owner who has the rights.

You can always create, seek, and find a range of options to determine how you will respond to what happens.

## **Responding vs. Reacting**

Responding is the God-given *ability to respond* with Self Confidence & Control, Thoughtfulness, Wisdom, and Love; Reacting on the other hand generally reflects a certain level of Insecurity and Defensiveness manifesting in Negative Judgment toward the other's thoughts, feelings, points of view, character, etc.

Reactivity can reflect a Belief that the other is not entitled to their thoughts, feelings, points of view, etc.

Defensiveness often reflects operating from a base of guilt, fear, shame and or insecurity.

On the flip-side Defensiveness can serve as a Protector when attacked inappropriately.

In every interaction you are either Responsive or Reactive, Purposeful or Problematic, Effective or Ineffective!!

## MIND & BODY

The Mind & Body are a Continuous Ebb & Flow of Sensing & Thinking & Feeling – it's Immensely Beneficial & Freeing to Be Mindful & Aware of this Continuous Ebb & Flow Experience.

Below is a breakdown to help better understand what this fascinating and yet complex experience looks like.

All below are influenced by our family of origin, early and current socialization, and value systems.

### **Needs / Desires / Stress – Motives**

We are Live to meet Needs, Desires and Cope with Stress.

You always have a Motive / Reason to meet a Need / Desire for everything you do.

#### Premise # One Regarding Needs / Desires / Stress:

You *Need* To Be Attentive to Your Emotions & Thoughts – Your Emotions & Thoughts Will Influence Your Attitude, Choices, and Behavior in the way you meet your needs, desires, and cope with stress.

You Always have a Choice as to What you Do with Your Attitude, Perceptions, Beliefs & Behavior in the way you meet your needs, desires, and cope with stress.

You *Need* To Own the Consequences of Your Choices.

You *Need* To Be In Control of Yourself & Choices, Not Others.

If you are not careful you can unknowingly let others control you (powerlessness) or attempt to control other (which leads to a power-struggle).

You *Need* To Recognize that the World around us is Both Good and Bad, that we all make good and poor choices, that we are all fallible and wonderful - This Is Reality.

#### Premise # Two Regarding Needs / Desires:

We are All *Motivated* to Fulfill the following *Needs & Desires*:

To Be Loved and to Love; to Be Understood and to Understand; to be Accepted and to Accept; to be Validated and to Validate; to be Listened to and to Listen; and to be Considered and to Consider.

To have Meaning, Purpose, Fulfillment, Joy, Contentment, Security, Accomplishments, etc.

To be in Relationship and to be Alone.

To have Freedom of Choice.

*Problematic* to Deny, Reject, nor Take Ownership of Your Needs / Desires and Motives.

*Problematic* Not to Be In Tune with What Your Motives are.

Your Motive could be out of Anger, Fear, Guilt, Hurt, etc.

Hidden Agendas or Ulterior Motives are not easy to detect.

A Hidden Agenda / Motive can be to Control or Manipulate for your needs / desires; To Be Right and Prove the Other Wrong; and or More Interested in Expressing your opinion than caring about the other.

## **Expectations**

Expectations are about meeting Needs & Desires for Change, Growth, Accomplishments, Healing, Fulfillment, and Dealing with Stress.

It's normal of have Expectations of Self and Others – The Difference is your level of Awareness and Management of them.

Expectations give cause for communication.

*Problematic* when you fail to take Responsibility and Mis-Manage your expectations – you need to have a good understanding and ownership of your expectations before they can be communicated and processed well; learn to check the “Expectation / Should Meter” (see below).

Problematic when you expect more of others than your self.

Problematic when you expect too much of others and yourself.

Even more problematic when you Demand and Control others to meet your expectations.

Perfectionism is an example of an Unrealistic Expectation.

Expectations are never the problem, the problem is not understanding and managing them well.

Problematic when you Do Not Discuss Your Expectations.

The Solution is Not Having Expectations because that is impossible.

Whenever a strong emotion (i.e., anger and or depression) arises check “Expectation / Should Meter” (see below).

Expectations can be a good Reality Check.

## **Perceptions & Judgments & Beliefs & Opinions**

Perceptions, Judgments, Beliefs and Opinions are probably the Heart of the Thinking Process.

Whether You are Alone or with Others, Your Mind & Body is in a Continuous Ebb & Flow of Sensing & Perceiving, and in this continual flow of Sensing & Perceiving your Mind is Constantly Judging & Evaluating & Interpreting & Forming Beliefs and Opinions.

Learn to Distinguish the Difference Between a Thought, Opinion, Fact and Emotion – this helps to Respond to what is actually going on in the world compared to what you Think is going on.

When it comes to Dialog, your Mind is Constantly Judging & Evaluating & Interpreting the Perceived Feeling, Meaning, Intention, Agenda, Attitude, Opinion, and Belief of the Other's Words & Body Language.

Consequently it is natural to form a Conclusion, Opinion, Belief, and or Judgment about what the other is Meaning and upon their Character.

Your Judgments are influenced by your Value & Belief System, so what your mind does is Compare, Contrast, and Evaluate what is being Perceived According to Your Value / Belief System.

*Problematic* when you Believe your Perception To Be Fact, *as if* you know Un-Doubtedly what the other really Means, what their Motive is, etc.

Problematic when you React Negatively (Judgment, Interpretation, and Belief) and Make a Premature Conclusion without gaining clear Understanding.

Part of Emotional Illness is due to this Faulty Belief Process.

Our tendency is to Justify Self & Judge the Other – the Need is to develop a Balance of Compassionate Justification & Sober Judgment of self and others.

We can all tend to Rationalize ourselves Justly & Judge the other Negatively; we all have our moments when we believe the other was more at fault – remember what Jesus said about the Plank and the Speck – this does not mean Excusing Responsibility on either side.

## **Emotions / Stress**

Emotions are like Weather, felt but not easy to see.

Emotions Flow with Perceptions & Expectations; they Alert us to how we are Processing & Perceiving, what we are Expecting and or Believing, and how we are Experiencing Life.

Emotions reflect our State of Being, Moods and Temperaments.

Emotions help us to become Aware of our Choices, Needs, Desires, Hurts, Stress, and Struggles in all facets of life.

Emotions Need to be Genuinely Regarded, Embraced, Experienced, & Understood.

Emotions Need to Be Acknowledged, Understood & Accepted *Before* they can be Expressed.

Emotions are the dashboard of the soul to help us understand and make sense of our Internal and External Experience, so Pay Attention to your Emotions!!

They are there for a Valid Reason!!

Take Responsibility to Own, Manage, and Understand your Emotions.

Emotions help us to connect Intimately with Our Self, Others & God.

Learn to Process your *Feelings* about Feelings & Thoughts and Process your *Thoughts* about Feelings & Thoughts; yes, you read that accurately ☺

Anger, Depression, Sadness, Anxiety, Pain, & Stress are Normal; they are *signals* for valid reasons.

Difficult Emotions can also be an Indicator of a Need to Grieve.

*Problematic* when you Deny, Invalidate, Condemn, Attempt To Control, and Fail to take Responsibility for your emotions.

Failure to process your emotions makes your problem worse.

When we feel Hurt, Fear, Anger, etc. our general tendency is to either Condemn our Self or Blame the Other.

It is Normal for all of us to Take Things Too Personal.

It is also Normal to Feel Sensitive, Insecure, Shameful, Believe you are Guilty, Rejected, Become Defensive, and yet the Goal is to Understand the Reasons for Feeling and Believing as you are.

There is no such thing as being too sensitive; the Real Problem is to either Minimize or Catastrophize.

There is a difference between What is Personal vs. Taking it Too Personal – all interactions Are Personal, yet when you *take it too personal* you Believe something is Wrong with you, that its all of your fault, or you are making it all about yourself. Neither is True.

There are Valid Reasons to feel Insecure at times - helps to Maintain Sensitivity, Realize Limitations, keeps us Humble, and ultimately keeps us Dependent upon God.

## **Should's**

Should's can reflect Opinions, Beliefs, Values, Perspectives – Not a Problem as long as you Respect that Other's Have Opinions, Beliefs, Values, & Perspectives as well.

Problematic when Should's reflect Legalism, Right-Wrong or Black&White Thinking.

Problematic when you Strongly Expect others to *Agree* with your Opinions, Beliefs, Values, Perspectives.

Problematic when you Strongly Expect others To *Do It Your Way*; this is when you *Should On Others*.

Problematic when your Expectations of yourself are Unrealistic, i.e., Perfectionism; this is when you *Should On Yourself*.

Problematic when you Believe you Should Not Feel What you Feel – the Ultimate Contradiction!!

Problematic is when you Believe another Should not feel what they Feel.

Should's Block the Need to Understand What and Why you are Thinking and Feeling as you are.

Two Points when you are in Should-Mode – One, this only leaves you two options because Should's are Either-Or, which limits your options, and Two, this can reflect a lack of Freedom of Choice to consider many viable options.

The Motivation under Should's is generally about Fear and or Control.

Should's can cause a lot of Stress.

Should's can Reflect Control Issues.

When a conversation is filled with Should's it can reflect attempts to Control the other, and can reflect feeling out of Control – critical to explore.

When you think of the terms Just or Fair, you are thinking about the way life should be.

You Learn to come to terms that life is neither just nor fair.

The big lesson is that you Learn to deal with life as it is.

You only get stuck when you protest reality for what you believe should be.

When you are stuck in blame and what you believe should be, you remain miserable and imprisoned by your own belief, another way of being your own worst enemy.

If you give up the demand that life and the people in it be something other than what they are, and Learn to become accepting of the problem for what it is, and take ownership of yourself, you will discover greater potential to find creative solutions to resolve difficult situations.

Should's are Decisions that Need to be made.

Instead of *Shoulding*, Learn to Develop the Process of Asking yourself What you Need, Would Like, What you Believe is Best, of Value, most Loving and Wisest for yourself and or Others.

Many times people do not even Question Why They Should Do something – usually the answer is *Because that's what my parents did... or what others do... or what I think my parents or others would want me to do.*

Learn to Question Should's – Where does it really State you Have to do this or that in this particular way?

Is there really a Law that states this mandate?

### **The “Expectation / Should Meter” – Processing Difficult Emotions**

When you are experiencing difficult emotions, ask yourself the following Questions:

Q 1 – Ask yourself what you were Expecting of yourself or the other? Your Expectation (Need or Desire) did not get met the way you hoped it would. Time to Re-Evaluate Needs, Desires, Goals, etc.

Q 2 – What did you Believe Should Have or Should Not have happened? Your Should is about Your Belief, Opinion, or Judgment, and even though you believe it should have or should not have happened, it did, so what you Believe or Judge will not solve this dilemma; it does not change reality – The Need is to Try and Understand Why it happened in order to have better potential in Figuring out What you Need to do; sometimes you may not Understand Why something Happened, what is more important is to Believe What you can Do.

Q 3 – Ask yourself How are you Perceiving & What you Are Believing about the Other or Situation. Remember to distinguish the difference between a thought, fact, opinion and emotion.

Q 4 – What part of Reality are you not Accepting, Fighting, Resisting, nor Understanding?

Q 5 – What is Changing that you are not Accepting, Fighting, Resisting, nor Understanding?

Q 6 – What might you be Attached to that is Changing?

Q 7 – What are you trying to Control for Or feeling out of Control over?

Q 8 – Whom / What are you Comparing yourself to? What could you be taking Too Personally? Are you trying to Be Perfect?

Q 9 – What realm of Codependency is playing out? For example, Whom are you trying to Please? What Responsibilities do you Believe are yours that may not be?

So when you are aware of a Should playing out, the Need / Goal is to first of all Realize and Accept you are feeling what you are feeling for a reason.

The more you fight and resist your struggle the worse you will feel, and the less likely in Figuring out what the Cause is and What you Can Do.

You will Lose every time you fight, resist, and struggle, and whatever your are fighting is in Control of you.

You can Learn to Understand what Causes your Struggles, Think through your Options and Make the Wisest Choice possible.

### **Choices - Behaviors – Consequences - Control**

All the above Influence *Choices*, Manifest *Behaviorally*, & Lead towards *Consequences*.

Communication is 97% Body Language and 3% Words. Tone, Manner, & Attitude speak Volumes.

Having Appropriate *Control* of Your Life is Understanding the Natural Laws of Cause & Affect, Reaping & Sowing, and or Physics.

These Natural Laws Teach us that there are Positive & Negative Consequences of Our Choices.

Failure to Understand & Accept these Natural Laws Limits and or Compromises your Power, Control & Influence.

Your Life, at this very present moment in time, is The Result of a Culmination of Choices.

The Natural Law of Cause & Affect Teaches us that Not only are We Affected Positively & Negatively by People & Circumstances, We as Well Affect Others and Circumstances Positively & Negatively too.

Every Minute you live life you are Making a Choice, not only what you will physically do, yet what you will Do and with Your Thoughts & Emotions.

Learn to Recognize what you have Control over and what you don't have Control over – you only have control over yourself, which means you have control of your Attitude & Choices - Not others.

If you do not believe you have a Choice, you will not be in Control of your life, and you will resent the ones you perceive as being in Control of yourself.

Be careful of your thoughts, for your thoughts become your words;  
Be careful of your words, for your words become your deeds;  
Be careful of your deeds, for your deeds become your habits;  
Be careful of your habits, for your habits become your character;  
Be careful of your character, for your character becomes your destiny.

### **Serenity Prayer**

God Grant me the Serenity to Accept the Things I Cannot Change;  
Courage to Change the Things I can; and Wisdom to know the Difference.

Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting Hardships as the Pathway to Peace;

Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;

Trusting that He will make all things Right if I surrender to His Will;

That I may be Reasonably Happy in this Life

and Supremely happy with Him Forever in the next.

Amen.

*Reinhold Niebuhr*

