

Outside-in and inside-out boundaries

“Beautiful things start to happen when you realize that life, like driving a car, is from the inside out, not the outside in.” Richard Carlson

“Boundaries express one's wants, needs, and preferences in communication with the other. When these wishes, needs and preferences are realized by considering each other's boundaries, mutual and healthy boundaries are formed. We need boundaries throughout life because boundaries contain basic elements that will support our psychological well-being in our lives such as taking responsibility, being safe, understanding cause-effect relationships, regulating our emotions, respecting ourselves and others. These boundaries, which begin at home, continue at school, and then diversify outside, are gradually built on top of the previous one. Each boundary awareness that an infant, child or adolescent gains makes it easier to adapt to the next boundary.

Children are in contact with their environment from the mother's womb. As they grow, their communication skills develop, they become active, they wonder what is going on around them and they try to understand cause and effect relationships. They try again and again to discover where, when and how to act when they encounter something new. While trying to understand these inner and outer worlds, children sometimes encounter the limits set by adults for their own safety. Some of these boundaries begin with “no”s that children often hear at an early age. For example “No, don't touch there!”, “No, it's bedtime!”, “No, you can't hit me!”. The child learns to say no by modeling his/her parents or caregivers. The child's "no" is also the child's way of setting boundaries: "No, I don't want to eat!", "No, I will wear my green socks, not my red socks!", "No, I will not do my homework now!" aspect...

Boundaries arise from the need to keep the good in and the bad out. This need to set boundaries can sometimes be physical, sometimes personal, and sometimes emotional.

Physical Boundaries: Physical boundaries protect our physical space and body. Our privacy, our body, the physical distance we put between ourselves and our physical needs are within these boundaries. These boundaries may differ in accordance with the environment we are in, the person in front of us, our own needs and the needs of the other person. Sleeping in his/her own bed, cleaning himself/herself after the toilet from the age of five or six, taking a shower independently from the adult from the age of six or seven, dressing his own clothes contribute to the formation of physical boundaries. The acquisition of physical boundary awareness is also possible by seeing and understanding the physical or verbal expressions coming from the child by the adult. For example, when the child expresses that he/she is full, the caregiver should understand this and not be persistent. When the child does not want to kiss or hug someone, the parent's respect and understanding of this situation. It ensures the formation of physical limit consciousness in the child, so that the child's expression of this desire does not create shame, guilt, fear. Thus, the child becomes aware of his own physical limits and the physical limits of others, and this makes the child an individual who is sensitive to physical limits in his social life. The child's adoption of the limits set by himself or herself from an early age is a step towards the formation of more abstract personal and emotional boundaries.

Personal Boundaries: Personal boundaries are a representation of our choices, decisions, values, responsibilities, respect for ourselves and others, and reactions that we express in our communication and interaction with others. Attitudes and behaviors such as knocking on the door of the baby, child or adolescent before entering their room, not reading their personal belongings such as diary and memory book without their permission, respecting the privacy of their messages and conversations with their friends during adolescence, respecting their preferences if it is safe and appropriate for their age, and offering the right to choose. These behaviors and attitudes create awareness of their personal boundaries.

Emotional Boundaries: Emotional boundaries are set by the fact that every emotion we feel is natural and acceptable. This gives us the right not to criticize or ignore our feelings. Acknowledging the emotion of the baby, child or adolescent, not ignoring negative emotions, when upset, angry or scared or worried instead of saying "Don't be sad.", "What is there to be afraid of?", "There is nothing to worry about.", you can say "This experience made you very sad.", "This dream scared you a lot.", "It pisses you off when I remind you of bedtime/homework/rules." Emphasizing their feelings and emphasizing that it is natural brings acceptance and understanding in relationships and therefore it is a respect for emotional boundaries. Reminders and preventive talk that the emotion experienced should not harm oneself or others is also a limit.

It is possible to internalize the consciousness of boundaries with positive discipline methods, attitudes that support and prepare the child for life. One of the important points for this is that it is the explanation of expectations and feelings to the child or adolescent. For example; "I wonder about you when you go out with your friends without my permission. When you want to go out, can you share it with me?" or "The living room is a common space that we all use. It's hard for us to move when you bring all your toys here. You can choose a toy that you want to have with you, or if you want to play with all of them, you can play in your room" and share the expectations, and solutions can be found together. Another point is to be a model for children and adolescents with our behaviors and attitudes.

How do you talk when you're angry?

How do you calm down?

How do you establish communication?

When parents or caregivers face difficult situations and emotions, the reactions become a model for their children and present a learning opportunity for them in the most effective way.

When the person's attitudes and behaviors contain awareness of boundaries are appreciated, the person will be motivated to act in accordance with awareness of boundaries. For example: "I realized that you were patiently listening to your friend and trying to understand her feelings and needs, you made an effort for this, I was proud of you.", "You managed your anger without harming yourself and the other person. Maybe it was very difficult, but you were able to stay calm. You explained what angered you. I saw how mature you were in expressing yourself.". Phrases like these can be used by parents to motivate the child and reinforce positive behavior.

Boundaries also mean that we will not be as responsible as those who are responsible. Healthy physical, personal, and emotional boundaries means healthy relationships. Healthy relationships are also established by not being neglected by others in peer, family, dating relationships and business life, not being pressured or forced to obey the rules, and not displaying such attitudes and behaviors on others, and being able to stand on a balanced boundary. While the boundaries provide an intermediate distance between the other and the other, they provide the opportunity to create an identity for ourselves.

“Setting boundaries is a way of showing self-compassion. Having personal boundaries does not make me rude, selfish, and insensitive because I choose my own way. I care about myself.”

Christine Morgan

Resources

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