BARRIERS TO BOUNDARIES

The prominent conversation around boundaries is focused on ways to set them or the kind of people we need boundaries with.

The part that is often overlooked is the barriers to boundary setting. What makes it difficult for us to set boundaries with people in our life?

The entire discussion of boundaries is often portrayed as black or white, but the actual process is a lot more grey; it is emotional and difficult and that is what we want to highlight here.

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- Fearing rejection or abandonment: When you have been taught that boundaries are bad, they often feel like a punishment. This is something we see most frequently in our society (india) because boundaries are not common at all. Thoughts like what would be the consequences of setting boundaries, would they reject me or leave me are common fears. This holds us back from setting them in the first place.

- Not knowing how: Boundary setting is difficult and often a foreign concept, when we don't see it growing up,

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we never learn how to do them.

- Fear of confrontation or upsetting others: It is scary to set boundaries because it can cause an argument or the other person to be upset with us. Upset or anger is like a weapon, it prevents us from setting boundaries.

- Guilt or shame: Feeling like you are hurting or punishing others by setting boundaries induces guilt or shame, setting a negative association with boundaries.

- We will explain with an example on the next page.

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It is helpful to know that even if we feel guilt, fear or shame, we should try and set boundaries anyway (i.e not wait for the feelings to go away) and also that the best way to reinforce our boundaries is to see what we want to do if a boundary is not followed, and follow through with that action.

For example, if you've told your room mate that you need the kitchen by xyz time, and they don't give it, how would you like to respond to that non-follow? Often consistently following the consequence giving and boundary setting for many cycles is what helps in getting it followed.

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