

Three Ways to Lay Down Boundaries

Hello! Welcome back. This is the last lesson in Step Three: Implementing New or Refreshed Boundaries. In Step One, we discussed the basics of boundaries in order to get a true understanding of them. In Step Two, we talked about the principles of boundaries and what it takes to make ones that work and in Step Three, we've been discussing how to implement those boundaries into our daily lives.

In this lesson, we're going to be talking about **the only three ways I believe we can lay down our personal boundaries with our loved ones: Speak to them privately, write to them, or discuss them with a 3rd party.**

One of the biggest problems that comes with boundaries is that we keep them as "silent boundaries" and don't discuss them with our loved ones. It's very important to communicate what our boundaries are, not to, "Lay down the law" but so our loved ones understand what will and will not work for us. Now, don't get your expectations too high as it's unlikely they'll *understand, remember* or *respect* those boundaries but they still need to know you have them.

One of the biggest mistakes I feel that I've made with boundaries is that I didn't communicate them beforehand or, when I did communicate them, I expected that they would be respected because I had now defined what was, and was not, okay with me.

Silly girl.

The truth is, no matter how hard your loved one tries if they're in active addiction or in recovery from an addiction- they will have a hard time respecting your personal boundaries. **It doesn't mean they don't love you.** Remember the broken cup? Sally

can love her friend and still break her cup. She would feel bad for breaking the cup but if she's clumsy, she's bound to break something again (until she works on her coordination or starts to respect her friend's cup boundaries!). Not the greatest analogy but you get the idea!

We have to communicate the boundary.

But communicating boundaries can be very hard! Like a wild horse, our loved ones will balk at the bridle. *Stomping, smashing, crashing, whipping* against restraints. They just do. If you've ever had to have that first-time conversation where you were serious about boundaries, you know exactly what I mean (leave a comment below if you do, I'd love to hear your story!).

So, before you do anything else, be prepared. Don't expect the fight but also don't expect compliance. Let's pray before we speak, expect they will not like what we say and be pleasantly surprised if it's a peaceable exchange.

There are three ways I see to lay out your boundaries. If you have tried another, more creative, way and it's successfully worked out for you- I would love to hear it!

1. Speak to Your Loved One About Your Boundaries Privately

This seems like the most obvious way to communicate boundaries. In my experience, and this is my experience only, this is not the best way to do it. However, peaceful communication is not something my husband and I excel at so if that's something that works in your relationship by all means- *ignore what I'm saying!*

Speaking to your loved one alone would absolutely be their preference for you to lay out your boundaries. They don't want someone else to hear that conversation because A. It's embarrassing and B. Then there is someone else they need to be

accountable to. However, in the Bible, it tells us that if someone sins against us we are to go to them privately first.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”

-Matthew 18:15 (ESV)

Now, there are some things we could argue in this verse (it says “brother” which indicates “friend”, not “child” or “spouse”, you likely have told them many times in private already, etc.) but because these are direct instructions from Jesus, I feel like it’s a road map we can feel good about following when dealing with sin.

So, if you feel you can have a peaceful exchange, plan a nice evening, prepare your loved one the day before and have the conversation about your boundaries.

Some tips for talking:

- Do not attack
- Do not pass blame
- Do not belittle
- Do not condemn
- Do not yell (obviously)
- Try to have the whole conversation without saying, “You...” (Talk about yourself, not them)
- Give them time to talk
- Don’t expect a response
- Be okay with receiving an angry response

- If they are angry and start to attack, blame, belittle, condemn or yell- end the conversation

2. Write Your Loved One a “Boundary Letter”

This seems a little passive-aggressive but if you know that a conversation is going to turn volatile, don't even bother having it. Instead, in keeping with what Jesus said, privately write them a letter. The exact same rules apply as above and if they try to talk to you after and the conversation turns volatile, end the conversation immediately.

3. Discuss Your Boundaries with a Third-Party

And then Jesus said,

“But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

-Matthew 18:16 (ESV)

A third-party is my favourite option. I would recommend discussing boundaries with an addiction-trained counsellor as your third-party. I have tried to do this with pastors, parents, friends- it rarely works. The most peaceful exchanges have always been in therapy. Addiction counsellors are trained for the family dynamics of addiction plus, they almost always have personal experience to bring to the table. That experience is *invaluable* both for gaining the respect of your loved one and for truly understanding what you're going through. **I know therapy can be costly but the fact is, the cost is much greater to live the way you're living than it is to make an appointment.** Tell the counsellor you have made boundaries and would like to discuss them with your loved one with a third-party. They may want to go over them with you- great! Take their knowledge and insight and use it to add to what you already made. Remember,

boundaries will sometimes need to be reevaluated and that doesn't mean the boundary has failed- it means your situation or perspective has changed.

That's all for Step Three! Don't forget to download your worksheet for this lesson. In Step Four, we're going to talk about how to live out your boundaries. Remember not to skip ahead and start talking to your loved one before you finish this course!