

[Note to Chair: Chair and Host can be two separate duties. The Chair reads the format. The Host calls on people to share. Chair decides if they wish to be Host too.]

Welcome to our Setting Boundaries Meeting. This meeting lasts one and one-half hours, with open fellowship for the following 30 minutes, moderated by the Chair. We will begin with a reading on Boundaries from Strengthening My Recovery, followed by the week's reading from the following format, and followed by open sharing.

Our Business Meeting takes place the last Wednesday of the month following the meeting. Agenda items for the Business Meeting can be emailed to

This material comes primarily from work being done by the Boundaries study group at the World Service of ACA and a recent workshop on boundaries. We will use the raise hands feature of zoom for sharing.

My name is _____ and I am your leader for today. This week, we are on week ___ of the materials.

Please join me by taking a deep breath and reading the ACA version of the Serenity Prayer.

God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change.

The courage to change the one I can.

And the wisdom to know that one is me.

Are there any ACA announcements?

Please put your email in chat if you would like to be on an announcement list. We are creating an optional contact list. We will add your name to the announcement list. If you wish to be on the contact list, please follow the link which is posted in chat:

Can someone volunteer to read “The Laundry List” p 587

BRB

Can someone volunteer to read “The Solution.” p 590 BRB

[links to post in chat]

THE LAUNDRY LIST (pg. 587 BRB)

<https://adultchildren.org/literature/laundry-list/>

THE SOLUTION (pg. 590 BRB)

<https://adultchildren.org/literature/solution/>

Reading from Strengthening My Recovery: [Chair chooses one]

Can someone read _____ [date and page number] from Strengthening My Recovery?

January 18 A New Way of Life (page 29 in SMR)

June 13 Trait Seven (page 171 in SMR)

June 22 Tolerating the Unacceptable (page 180 in SMR)

June 24 Boundaries (page 182 in SMR)

July 9 Siblings (page 198 in SMR)

August 28 Boundaries (page 249 in SMR)

September 15 Promise Nine: Healthy boundaries and limits will become easier... (page 268 in SMR)

November 8 Emotional Sobriety (page 324 in SMR)

Following the Reading of the Week, below, we will open the meeting to shares.

We ask that when you share, you limit your share to 3 minutes.

Is anyone willing to be timer? We ask the timer to announce “1 minute” when there is 1 minute left, and “time” at the end of 3 minutes, unless the person sharing asks to self-time.

[Optional: Chair may host for shares OR ask for another volunteer. If you want someone else to be Host: “Is anyone willing to be “host?”

We will call on people to share based on the raised hands feature of zoom, The host will end with “thank you, you were heard, ” unless the person sharing asks not to be acknowledged.

When speaking, we use "I" statements rather than "YOU" statements. This action strengthens our boundaries and builds our self-respect.

We do not engage in cross talk. Cross talk means interrupting, referring to, or commenting on what another person has said during the meeting. We do not give advice. We listen to each other, which is a gift many of us did not receive in childhood.

Remember, whatever you hear in the meeting is shared with the trust and confidence that it will remain here and not be repeated. This is to maintain safety and our commitment to anonymity for members who share during our meeting.

The space between sharing is when the healing happens. We honor the pause.

This week are on week number _____. We will read each weekly reading twice and then take a one-and-a-half minute “meditation break” to let the reading sink in.

Would anyone like to begin with the first paragraph?

[After the second reading:]

We will now take a meditation break of one and one half minutes. Will the timer please indicate when meditation time is up?

AFTER MEDITATION, SHARING BEGINS.

* * *

**WHEN READING AND SHARING IS OVER,
read the following to close the meeting-**

Closing:

Who would like to read the ACA Promises? (pg. 591, Big Red Book):

1. We will discover our real identities by loving and accepting ourselves.
2. Our self-esteem will increase as we give ourselves approval on a daily basis.
3. Fear of authority figures and the need to "people-please" will leave us.
4. Our ability to share intimacy will grow inside us.
5. As we face our abandonment issues, we will be attracted by strengths and become more tolerant of weaknesses.
6. We will enjoy feeling stable, peaceful, and financially secure.
7. We will learn how to play and have fun in our lives.
8. We will choose to love people who can love and be responsible for themselves.
9. Healthy boundaries and limits will become easier for us to set.
10. Fears of failure and success will leave us, as we intuitively make healthier choices.
11. With help from our ACA support group, we will slowly release our dysfunctional behaviors.
12. Gradually, with our Higher Power's help, we will learn to expect the best and get it.

**It is now time for the 7th Tradition. You may make a contribution to this meeting by sending a Venmo contribution to ChristineB inCT or by contributing directly to ACA World Service:
<https://adultchildren.org/7th-tradition/>**

In closing, remember that anonymity is the foundation of our program. What you hear here, who you see here, let it stay here.

Before we close with the Serenity prayer, would anyone be willing to be the Chair for this meeting next week?

We will close the meeting with the ACA version of the Serenity prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change
The courage to change the one I can
And the wisdom to know that one is me.

Week 1

What is a Boundary?

A boundary is an action we take to protect ourselves from unwanted words or actions from another if we feel uncomfortable or unsafe. It can be a statement or an action, or both. A Boundary is an action coming from love, not a reaction in anger or revenge.

- When we are new to recovery we may wish to detach with love from friends or family members who we feel impede our recovery. This may be because of past trauma, unwanted judgment, advice coming from others, or simply giving ourselves a safe space to feel our feelings as we review our past.
- When we establish a boundary, we break the “Don’t talk, Don’t trust, Don’t feel” and “Don’t Remember” rules.
- We set boundaries for ourselves, not to demand a change in others. We may request a change in behavior by others, but we remember that we cannot change anyone but ourselves.
- We do not need to explain or justify our boundaries.

[Zoom host: cut and past discussion questions in Chat:]

Discussion Questions:

1. How can setting a boundary help my recovery today?
2. What was my experience with boundaries in childhood and how do I see that affecting my ability to set boundaries today?
3. Have I set a boundary expecting someone else to change?
4. Do I have a success in setting/honoring a boundary to share today?

Week 2 What is a Boundary, continued

- Boundaries are part of building healthy relationships. As we progress in program, we will discover that setting boundaries with family, friends, intimate partners, and with people in our work or other organizations helps us discover our authentic selves, find our own voice, and practice self love.
- Boundaries are a spiritual practice. We set boundaries using spiritual tools such as honesty, respect, compassion, and love—for ourselves and for others. A boundary is not a punishment of others or a failing on our part, but a part of giving ourselves self-respect and love.
- Discussing our need for a boundary and our proposed words or actions with others in program, such as a fellow traveler, a sponsor, or a study group helps us develop discernment. We can practice with a safe person.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What spiritual tools can I use in setting a boundary?
2. How has setting a boundary helped me to find/express my authentic self?
3. Do I have a boundary success to share this week?

week 3 What is a Boundary continued

- Learning to set boundaries helps us to recover from Laundry List traits such as people-pleasing, fixing and rescuing, shutting down our feelings, codependence, or fear of angry people or authority figures. With the help of our Higher Power, we let go of self-harming behaviors.
- There are different types of boundaries, but their purposes are to allow us to be safe, respected, and free from harm. All boundaries remind us that feelings, behaviors, and attitudes of others are separate from our own.
- We must be willing to follow through and honor our boundaries. We do not negotiate our boundaries.

Discussion Questions.

1. What Laundry List traits have been triggered by my experience with setting boundaries?
2. How has setting a boundary helped me recognize my feelings?
3. When have I negotiated a boundary and with what result?
4. Do I have a success in setting/honoring a boundary to report today?

Week 4

How to Set Boundaries.

- I will use “I” sentences when stating a boundary because it is about me. When I use, “You” statements – I am dictating, or telling others what to do.
- I do not negotiate my boundary. I avoid haggling over why the other person does not honor it. I state my boundary clearly and honor it for myself.
- I feel, decide, and express my needs by setting boundaries for myself, not to demand a change in others. I will guard against people-pleasing or rescuing, both of which can harm my boundaries.
- I will recognize the body sensations that tell me I need to set a boundary. I can recognize the feelings and physical sensations I experience in daily life and use these body and mind indicators to help me remember past experiences.
- When I establish a boundary, I must be willing to follow through. I must honor my boundary even if others do not. For example, if I tell someone I will hang up the phone if they yell or raise their voice, I must be willing to hang up if they repeat that behavior.

Discussion Questions

1. How can I express my needs without blaming another in setting a boundary?
2. Give an example of a boundary statement using “I language.”
3. What body sensations do I experience that let me know I need to set a boundary?
4. Do I have a success in setting/honoring a boundary to report today?

Week 5

We learn to use neutral language and not to debate or accuse in setting boundaries. For example, instead of saying “ I will not talk to you if you keep criticizing dad,” (which can lead to a debate or a defense), we can simply say,

“I feel uncomfortable when you talk about dad, so I am going to stop this conversation.”

If the person persists, we can say, “I notice that you are still talking about dad, so I have decided to take a break from talking with you.”

Examples of some boundary statements:

- I have decided not to come to your house for Sunday dinners.
- I will hang up the phone if you raise your voice when you speak to me.
- I will speak with you for only 10 minutes at a time.
- I will not discuss [politics] with you. I am not willing to speak with you if you are not willing to agree to this.
- I am not willing to discuss with you what [a family member] does or does not do. I will stop the conversation if you start to talk about [this family member].

Discussion Questions:

1. Where have I encountered problems when someone ignores my boundaries?
2. What is an example of a boundary I can set using I language?
3. Have I experienced anger or resentment from others when I set a boundary using negotiation, debate or judgment?
4. What success have I experienced in setting a boundary?

Week 6

Benefits of setting Boundaries

Depending on our stage in recovery, boundaries can benefit our recovery as follows:

- Participating in ACA meetings. Most meetings contain a statement that asks members to refrain from cross talk: giving advice or referring to someone else's share when we speak. This is a boundary. It allows other members to feel safe in speaking their truth without fear of judgment, shaming or blaming. When we participate in business meetings, we observe a boundary of respect in allowing each member to speak without interruption. Our "group conscience" process is also a form of boundary, instead of shouting each other down or outvoting each other, behaviors we may have experienced in childhood.
- Detaching from family of origin. Our families are sometimes angry, upset or confused when we begin a program of recovery. They may fear we will blame them for our unhappiness. They may want to argue, defend themselves, or otherwise act out. Setting a boundary with some family members that we will not interact with them, or interact only on our terms, helps us feel safe and give us space to recover. We can change our minds as we progress in program.

Discussion Questions

1. What has participating in business meetings shown me about boundaries?
2. Have I set a boundary with a family member and what was the result?
3. Do I have a success in setting a boundary to share today?

Week 7 Benefits of Setting Boundaries, continued

- Detaching from people with whom we are codependent. Codependence is looking for emotional intimacy or support from people who are not able to give it. (BRB p 100). When we are codependent, we are entangled in someone else's life, sometimes people pleasing, sometimes trying to change them, but always denying the needs of our true self. When we come out of codependence, we learn our self worth does not depend on others. When we recognize these people in our lives, we may set a boundary to detach from that person. We remember that we cannot change another person. We learn to meet our needs with healthy people and by getting to know and love ourselves. We can show compassion for another person, but we are separate from the other person.
- Learning to stand up for ourselves and avoid people pleasing. Many of us begin program with low self-esteem. We may be used to going along with unacceptable behavior from others to avoid being shamed, blamed, or abandoned. As we learn more about our Laundry List traits, we practice detaching with love. We stand up for ourselves with loving language, not anger. We learn to increase our self esteem, realizing that esteem does not come from affirmation from others, but from our true inner self.

Discussion Questions:

1. Are there people in my life with whom I am codependent?
2. What has been my experience when I stand up for myself?
3. How has my self esteem improved from setting boundaries?
4. Do I have a success in setting a boundary to share today?

Week 8 The Benefits of Boundaries, continued

- Recognizing the difference between true love and fixing or rescuing.
As we start to recognize that many of our relationships are based on trying to fix, rescue, or change another person, we can gently set a boundary with them by releasing these behaviors. Remarkably, we may discover that some of the people we were trying to fix or change are just fine if we accept them as they are!
- Learning to respect the boundaries of others without taking offense, feeling abandoned, or running away. We learn to feel our feelings, even the uncomfortable ones, and discover that feelings will not kill us.

Discussion Questions

1. How have I discerned the difference between a boundary and trying to get someone else to change?
2. Where has acceptance shown me that a boundary was unnecessary?
3. Where have other people set boundaries with me?
4. Do I have a success in setting/honoring a boundary to report today?

Week 9 Benefits of Boundaries, continued

Learning conflict resolution skills. Setting boundaries helps us practice self-love and standing up for what we need. Many of us have avoided conflict and did not learn how to have healthy, respectful conversations. Setting boundaries helps us learn the skill of speaking the truth with love. It also helps us identify and claim our feelings.

Learning to recognize and reparent our inner child or children. As we grow in program, we learn that we have an inner child [or children] who is often triggered by other people's unhealthy words or actions. Our inner child gets our attention through body sensations, anxiety, and sometimes anger. We learn to reparent and calm our inner child by listening to the child, assuring the child we will not abandon the child, and taking steps to create a safe environment, including setting a boundary.

Discussion Questions:

1. What conflict resolution skills have helped me in setting boundaries?
2. Do I recognize an inner child within me? How does the inner child feel or react when a boundary needs to be set?
3. What can I tell the child to "reparent" the child in this situation?
4. Do I have a success in setting a boundary to share today?

Week 10

Boundary Checklist

The following is a boundary checklist that we can use to practice healthy boundaries.

1. What happened to me to create the need for a boundary?
2. How did I react? What Laundry list traits came up?
3. Describe the feelings and physical sensations I experienced.
4. How did my inner child/children feel about what happened? How can I support and protect him/her/them?
5. What needs do I need to express? What boundary decision do I need to make?

Discussion:

1. Respond to this checklist
2. Do I have a boundary success to share this week?

Week 11

Boundary Checklist, continued

6. Do I need to take a break, make a phone call, pray, meditate, draw, visualize this information, or use a boundaries worksheet to help continue processing my thoughts? What resources might help?
7. How can I tell the truth with love to the other person using “I” language?
8. Did I remember to use self-love, self-care, and to ask my fellow traveler, sponsor, and my Higher Power for help?
9. What are some safe boundary options or actions?

Discussion Questions:

1. Respond to these checklist questions.
2. Do I have a boundary success to share this week?

YOU MAY FIND THE FOLLOWING CHART, WHICH HAS BEEN FILLED OUT WITH A SAMPLE RESPONSE, HELPFUL IN PROCESSING A BOUNDARY.

What happened?	How did I react in the moment? What Laundry List Trait is involved?	Does this remind me of an event from my past?	What feelings and physical sensations did I experience ?	How do my Inner Children feel about what happened ?	My Boundary/ My Action
My older brother starts fights over politics	People pleasing; low self esteem—my opinion doesn't matter; fear of angry people; fear of authority figures	my father's rants and angry outbursts	overwhelm tightness in my stomach; throat hurts; vague in my thinking; flushed; fight/flight/ orfreeze?	fear of being hurt; no one listens to me; want to hide	I am uncomfortable discussing politics and will not discuss politics with you. Please stop.

Discussion Questions:

How can I use this format to work through a boundary issue?

Week 12

Fellowship Questions about Boundaries (from CT Intergroup Workshop 2020 (edited),

Q: I fear I set boundaries with family and friends that may be too rigid or punitive, such as “I am never coming to your home again.” How can I set healthy boundaries that are kind but still protect me?

A: Try not to speak when angry. Use the tools of honesty and willingness to see your part in the relationship breakdown. The 7th Step prayer helps. *God, I am now ready that you should remove from me all my defects of character, which block me from accepting your divine love and living with true humility toward others. Renew my strength so that I might help myself and others along this path of recovery.* (BRBp 220)

A: friend played the victim and I felt manipulated. I thanked her for her friendship. I then said “relationships are like the seasons. Sometimes I need to move on.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What is my experience with setting boundaries that may have been too rigid? Did I fall into black-or-white thinking?
2. Have I been able to adjust my boundaries over time as I have become more healthy?
3. What language have I used successfully in setting a boundary?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?
- 5.

Week 13

Q: I have a friend who I believe is angry with me. When we are in the same zoom meeting, she sends me a negative text after I share. I have tried to open a conversation with her, but she refuses to talk with me. What should I do?

A: If someone sends me negative texts, I recognize that they have poor internal boundaries. If I have tried to talk, but she refuses, I can let her go. I do not have to chase dysfunctional people.

I practice two boundaries for myself—external and internal. I visualize a dome over me—which contains external and internal boundaries. External boundaries protect me from incoming information that may feel harmful or unsafe.

My internal boundary protects others from ME. I don't need to share all of my thoughts. I don't need to explain my boundaries or get you to agree. The internal boundary keeps me from dumping on you.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been my experience with letting go of people who act negatively toward me?
2. Where have I violated my internal boundaries by over-sharing information?
3. How have I practiced finding safe people to share with?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?

Week 14

Q: I want to share a concern, but the other person dismisses my point as unimportant. How can I be heard when others will not listen to me?

A: I would begin using “I” language, such as “I feel unheard” or “I feel dismissed.” Once you have said how you feel, how the other person responds is not your job. Notice if your question “how can I be heard,” is really you asking “how can I get you to agree with me and follow my wishes?”

I cannot make someone “hear” me. The question is how will I handle the relationship? What are the consequences when they cross my line of acceptable conduct? I have the right to change the amount of time or the situations in which I will interact with this person.

Discussion Questions

1. What is my experience with trying to get other people to understand my point of view?
2. How can I reparent my inner child when they feel they were not heard?
3. What “I language” have I used to express that I feel hurt that I have not been heard?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?
- 5.

Week 15

Q: I try to set boundaries without communicating to another what my boundary is. For example, by just not calling a person who triggers me. Then I get upset when my boundary isn't understood or honored.

A: It would be nice if other people intuited our boundaries. But some people don't pick up our "signals." The question then becomes "how do I take care of myself?"

I try to set my boundary by telling the truth with love, speaking lovingly and kindly. I avoid anger and people pleasing. I avoid minimizing my needs or falling into taking care of others. I reassure my inner child. I may re-run a childhood memory and re-parent.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been my experience with hoping the other person will "get it" if I stop returning their calls or texts?
2. What loving language could I use to avoid care-taking or minimizing my needs?
3. How can I re-parent my inner child when they do not feel safe?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?
- 5.

Week 16

Q: I start off with a healthy boundary of not calling a person who is always negative. Then I relapse and start to call again. I don't know how to stop wrecking my own boundaries.

A: Boundaries grow stronger with step work and resources. In one of my relationships, I stopped trying to get another person to live to my expectations. For example, my sister puts everyone else down. I say, "I'm trying to eliminate gossip and sarcasm from my life." Now when the conversation turns negative, I say, "I've got to go!"

Discussion Questions:

1. How can I be gentle with myself if I am not perfect in enforcing my boundaries?
2. How am I making progress in enforcing boundaries?
3. What general language can I use that speaks to my self-care rather than judgment in setting a boundary?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?
- 5.

Week 17

Q: Are boundaries negotiable? Can or should I involve the other person in the boundary I set?

A: Boundaries in my experience need to be flexible. A boundary should be like a fence, not a wall. Walls keep out the bad, but they also keep out the good.

For me, there are three types of boundaries: No Boundary, which is painful; A Wall, where not much gets in or out, and Semi-Permeable, where I have choices.

Boundaries can change over time, under different circumstances. Other people can change, but that change is not up to me.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is my experience with setting a flexible boundary? How has it worked?
2. Have I set a boundary that I have been able to release/change over time?
3. Have I set a wall boundary that has created pain for me?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?
- 5.

Week 18

Q:I have trouble setting boundaries with some people who seem to be dominant and overbearing. How can I set a boundary to let them know this is not ok with me?

A: This deals with how I enforce my boundaries. It is harder with people who do not respect my boundaries. I need to recognize what the other person is capable of and whether they can change (usually they can't.) For example, I tell my brother I will not discuss politics with him. Also, I only call him when I want to talk with him and not because I think I "should" call him.

Avoid he/she said conversations. Keep your conversation about how you feel and what you need.

I also practice "book-ending" with boundaries. I call a fellow traveler and say how I am going to state and intend to enforce my boundary with another. Then I call my fellow traveler after interacting with that person. This makes me accountable, helps me come out of isolation, and process my feelings.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been my experience with needing to repeat my boundary statements with people who ignore my boundaries?
2. How has rehearsing a boundary statement with a program friend helped me in setting boundaries?
3. Do I have a boundary success to share today?

Week 19

Q: I took a break from taking ACA calls for health reasons and explained why. One member took this personally and started telling other people I was not working my program. How can I stop gossip about me from others in program?

A: I can't stop gossip. The answer is acceptance. Then, ask myself why I am so triggered. Reassure my inner child and practice affirmations. Reassure myself that my program works and keep away from negative attacks.

I share personal information only with trusted people. I have a boundary of self-containment, meaning I hold back the impulse to hurt myself. I stop taking poison and begin taking medicine.

I check my motivation. Am I trying to get an apology, trying to make the other person feel guilty?

I can approach the other person with curiosity rather than criticism:
“I am feeling uncomfortable. I've heard that you said XYZ. I want to talk to you to get your perception and settle any confusion.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been my experience with fearing others are gossiping about me?
2. Have I over-shared in places that are not safe?
3. Have I set a boundary hoping to get an apology or make someone feel guilty?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?
- 5.

Week 20

Q: I set a boundary not to have contact with my siblings based on childhood abuse. I still feel angry and upset with them, so it seems the boundary is not working. Thoughts?

A: Anger makes me a victim. I'm addicted to excitement. How do I find peace and serenity? If I focus on having a happy life and reparenting my inner child, then what my siblings do and say will seem less important. I can ask for help from another ACA in recovery.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have I recognized when anger is really an addiction to excitement?
2. Have I been able to see when my anger is really from the past and not about the person in front of me?
3. What safe ways have I found to deal with anger?
4. Do I have a boundary success to share today?

Week 21

Q: How do I deal with people in my daily life who remind me of family members I have set a boundary with? I feel triggered and upset even though I know they are not the ones who hurt me.

A: I am powerless over the effects of my childhood. When I get triggered, I revert to my Laundry List traits and flawed thinking. So I need to PAUSE. I can put my hand up and say “I need a time out.”

When I realize the issue is from my childhood, I can reparent my inner child. I can say, “I know [dad/mom] did not listen to you and you felt abandoned and unimportant. I am here today and I want to hear what you have to say. No matter what you say, I love you and am not going to leave you. You are safe with me.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some boundary violations that occurred in my childhood?
2. How have those violations been triggered today?
3. When have I paused and how has that worked?
4. What would my loving parent say to my inner child who is triggered over a boundary issue?
5. Do I have a boundary success to share today?

Week 22

Q: How can I set a boundary with myself to stop or lessen the voice of an inner critical parent, a self-doubting voice?

A: When I recognize the voice of my inner critical parent, I can take a breath and say “You may be trying to help me, but please have a seat. I have this. What you are saying isn’t helpful.”

I may be powerless over my first thought, but I am not powerless over my second thought. I am not powerless over what comes out of my mouth.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where do I hear the voice of your inner critical parent today?
2. How can I respond lovingly to the voice of the critical parent?
3. What are typical “first thoughts” I have when a boundary issue arises?
4. What “second thought” can help?
5. Do I have a boundary success to share today?