

Boundaries

in **Human**

Relationships

How to be

Separate

and Connected

Anné Linden

Director, New York Training Institute for Neuro-Linguistic Programming

*Boundaries
in Human
Relationships*
*How to be Separate and
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Introduction

This book explores how human beings remain individuals and yet can empathize and identify with others. It is an exploration of the many facets of individuality and togetherness, and it analyzes the most essential element that either supports or destroys self-esteem and relationships: *boundaries*, or the ability to be *separate and connected*.

I hope to increase the reader's awareness of human boundaries and how we actually "do" them—because boundaries are not accidents of fate or random luck. This book is for the reader who is open to considering relationships and self-esteem from a different perspective. While I do include some exercises to increase the reader's skill at purposefully "doing" boundaries, my primary intention is to provoke thought and questions.

In this book, I draw upon over 25 years of work as a teacher and therapist. I have observed and interacted with many students and clients, most of whom are adult professionals from business, the arts, education, and the helping professions, and many in the midst of either personal or professional transitions. All were motivated to improve themselves, their relationships, and their ability to communicate. This book is also the result of becoming aware of myself, my "stuck" places, traps, strengths, and my relationships with lovers, family, children, colleagues, friends, students, and clients.

I teach human communication and change using Neuro Linguistic Programming, Ericksonian Hypnosis, the Linden Parts Model, and the Linden Boundaries Model. To explain these models, I draw on years of experience and research into what makes for a successful relationship and a functioning, whole, and happy human being. I define "happy" not as deliriously gay, joyful, or ecstatic—but content yet yearning, satisfied but challenged, and moving toward as-yet unrealized dreams while savoring the present moment with all one's senses.

About 20 years ago, boundaries became more than an intellectual, taken-for-granted, little-understood concept when a colleague and I were discussing our work and some recent examples of success

and failure. At one moment, she looked at me and said, “Anné, all your work is about boundaries!” Immediately I knew this to be true, but at the same time I really didn’t know what it meant. I did not know specifically what human boundaries were, and I certainly did not know *how* they worked—how humans “did” boundaries. I knew for sure that they didn’t just happen, so I set out to discover what they were and how human beings create and maintain them.

At the time, I was lucky enough to have a small group of professionals in my Assistant Trainers Program, people with whom I had met four times a month for two years. They were intelligent, highly trained, and motivated professionals who enthusiastically participated in my research into boundaries. With their help over several years, I began to map out the basic structure of the Linden Boundaries Model. Since I am a teacher, this work evolved into trainings through which I further developed and refined the model and process of boundaries. The more I taught, the more I learned! When I began to write this book, I thought I understood boundaries and how they worked. I did, but writing my ideas down forced me to a much deeper level of understanding.

The first five chapters explore the structure of boundaries, what they are, and the patterns upon which they depend. Chapter 1 defines boundaries, loss of boundaries, and walls. There are three levels of boundaries, and Chapters 2, 3, and 4 describe these levels in depth. Chapter 5 lays out the five developmental, psychological patterns that form the foundation of boundaries. Chapter 6 explains the process of boundaries; it provides an in-depth study of how exactly the human being “does” boundaries. It also offers a step-by-step explanation of the three skills (perceptual, physiological, and cognitive) that we use to create and maintain boundaries. Exercises to increase awareness of and strengthen each skill are included at the end of Chapter 6. The last four chapters describe my own and others’ personal experiences that will deepen the reader’s understanding and recognition of the practical implications of boundaries in the important areas of our lives. They examine how the lack of boundaries or the exaggeration of them into walls influences our relationships, our identity, and our self-esteem.

Anné Linden
January 2008

Chapter IV

Contextual Boundaries

How do we know how to behave or what to expect in different situations? Different values or standards apply, and we shift our behavior and expectations according to the environmental cues we're receiving. This chapter describes the five categories of Contextual Boundaries: Place, People, Activity, Time, and Gender.

When you were 4 or 5 years old, you probably began to realize that using certain words around Grandma and Grandpa was not okay even though you could say them at home with your parents and siblings. You were beginning to make another kind of distinction, one that helped you understand that different situations or contexts had different rules for appropriate behavior: "Certain language is okay at home but not at Grandma's." It is around age 4 to 5 that you begin to develop *Contextual Boundaries* that are likely to remain unsophisticated and inconsistent until your late teens or early twenties.

There are many different types of situations in the external world, and they require different behavior and expectations. When you go to a foreign country and encounter a very different culture, it's important to know the rules for polite and acceptable behavior. In some cultures, getting physically close to someone when conversing is considered rude and offensive; in others, it is considered a sign of interest in and appreciation of the other. When you know these rules, your experience will be much smoother. You will be treated better, and it will be easier for you to communicate your needs and to connect with the people and the place.

It is not just in foreign cultures where you must understand the different rules for appropriate behavior and expectations. In everyday life, this is *equally* important. The distinctions you make between various circumstances allow you to know what to expect from yourself, others, and the situation itself, as well as what behavior

is appropriate. These Contextual Boundaries help you to make friends, succeed, create a positive impression, and avoid unnecessary sanction and disapproval. This level of boundaries includes five categories: *Place, People, Activity, Time, and Gender.*

1. Place

As my youngest son got ready to go to kindergarten, I was concerned about how he would respond. Until then, he had gone to a small, family-oriented nursery school, but this was “real” school. In our home, my children and I use “colorful language.” Never to denigrate others but more as an expressive tool! For a number of years, I had told Raven that there were some places, like Grandma’s house or public places, where that kind of language was inappropriate. School was one of these places. I had met his kindergarten teacher, Mrs. White, and while she was a kind and gentle person, she was very proper! I knew that if Raven used some of his favorite “colorful” expressions, she would be shocked and probably think less of him. He was a sweet and charming little boy, if a bit strong willed, and I was worried that he might create a negative impression that wouldn’t be a true reflection of his essential nature. So I kept my fingers crossed! One day after school, I stopped to talk to Mrs. White about Raven’s first week, and she immediately told me what a charming, delightful little boy he was! Whew! I knew then that he had made the contextual boundary between home and school.

The first category of Contextual Boundaries is Place. It is an environmental cue that helps to define different situations. You make distinctions between different types of places such as school and home. Other examples of this category are office and nightclub, home and church, a neighbor’s car and your own, the library and playground, the bank and the stables. In each case, the contextual boundary defines the place and the kind of behavior and expectations that are appropriate within it. This includes the kind of clothing to wear, the type of language to use, the degree of physical contact, expressiveness, freedom of movement, volume of voice, consideration of self and others—and just about all aspects of your behavior. You do not behave the same in a nightclub as you do in a church (or you don’t as soon as you recognize the difference

between these places). When you make a presentation before the board of directors of a bank and one before your local PTA, you even dress differently. A surgeon in a hospital cannot allow his feelings for his patient to interfere with his work, so he learns to detach himself from his emotions in order to use his skills to the best of his ability. Often this pattern becomes so habitual that he no longer makes the distinction emotionally between the hospital and his home. Without realizing it, he may become emotionally distant from his wife and children, which can cause all sorts of problems in his family life.

What if you walked into a library and didn't make the distinction between the library and a restaurant in terms of your behavior? After all, they're both public places! You'd make a very negative impression and annoy a lot of people if you spoke as loudly in the library as you do when dining out.

2. People

In the category of People, think of all the different types of people that you know: children and old people, teachers and friends, rabbis and priests, police and neighbors, bosses and colleagues. When you put excessively rigid boundaries or walls around a certain type of people, you limit yourself and your responses. Imagine that as a youngster you had very strict parents, teachers, and clergy around you and you developed a rigid idea of what people in authority were like. Your response became one of resentment and oversensitivity to any indication of authority. At 30, you might still respond this way to anyone in a position of authority. When you transform those walls into boundaries, you'll be able to connect to those individuals in authority positions and have some choice about your reactions rather than being trapped by knee-jerk responses.

The college professor who treats his students as though they are his friends has damaged his ability to teach and his students to learn. This loss of boundaries causes unnecessary pain and confusion when the professor has to give a low mark or negative feedback to a student who he considered a "friend." In this case, the familiarity of friendship interferes with the rigor of the learning process. It creates a sense of betrayal on the part of the students, and frustration

Chapter VI

Doing Boundaries

This chapter provides a detailed description of the three ways we create and maintain boundaries: simultaneous thinking, connecting to our body, and peripheral seeing and hearing. The lack of or distortion of these learned skills can cause serious problems with our self-esteem, and in our relationships. Included in this chapter are simple exercises to strengthen these skills.

Now that you have an idea of what boundaries are, the different levels of boundaries, and the developmental patterns necessary to support boundaries, you're probably asking yourself, "What can I do with this information? How can it make a difference in my life?" This chapter will answer that question.

You're already doing boundaries, but you're not aware of what you're doing or how you're doing it. Since you're not aware, you have few choices about creating and maintaining boundaries: when, where, with whom.

When I first started showing my Irish Wolfhounds in the breed ring, they sometimes looked great and sometimes they didn't. After taking some handling classes, I became aware that the size of the steps I was taking when I moved the dogs around the ring made a difference in how they reached out with their front feet and drove with their rear feet. I also learned where to put their feet when they were standing to make them look their best for the judge. Now I have more choice because I'm aware of *how* to show an Irish Wolfhound rather than accidentally getting it right sometimes and at other times making a mess, and not knowing what made the difference, only the results.

Boundaries are not something you have, like dark hair or a car. They are the result of the type of filters you use to organize your experience. You have three primary types of filters: cognitive

(simultaneous thinking), physiological (connecting to your body), and perceptual (your peripheral vision and hearing). The ways you use these filters become the skills of "doing" boundaries. They are the "how-tos" of boundaries. Filters are like strainers. For example, you're at the beach, and you want to collect small, round pebbles, medium-sized square pebbles, and orange pebbles. You have a strainer that has small, round holes, medium-sized square holes, and holes that let only orange pebbles through. Now there are millions of differently shaped and colored pebbles in the sand that you are sifting, but because of this special strainer, as you sift you will only collect the pebbles that are small and round, medium-sized and square, or orange.

Your conscious mind does this same sort of sifting. Because your conscious mind is very limited, it must select for particular kinds of information. It can only pay attention to between five and nine pieces of information at any moment. This means that you could not walk across a room if you had to do everything consciously: if you had to consciously monitor every shift in weight, contraction and expansion of muscles, lifting, flexing, and movement, there would not be enough conscious attention available to accomplish the simple task of walking. Your unconscious mind compares incoming information with the information and experiences you already have stored. It creates categories, generalizations, and sequences, and it stores these for future use. How does your limited conscious mind deal with the bombardment of thousands or millions of data in any experience? Like the strainer selecting for pebbles of a certain size, shape, and color, the mind also has filters. It selects for certain types of information and thus creates an attitude, mood, receptivity, or resistance. Think of bamboo blinds or thin, cotton, gauzy curtains and how they filter the light coming through a window. Imagine a room with no blinds, how the sun streams in creating brightness, warmth, and clarity. When you put bamboo blinds on the windows, what happens to the mood of that room? The light is darker, cooler, and more diffused. The blinds or the curtains do not block out the light entirely but filter it in ways that change the ambiance of the environment. Light coming through a blue or green or red curtain, or through a light or dark bamboo blind, creates very different effects. The same effect happens when different-colored filters are put on the lights of a movie

set or theater stage; they set the mood for the scene unfolding before the audience.

Consider a day when you wake up in a good mood. You're thinking about the attractive girl you're having dinner with later and the papers you finished marking last night that you'll return to your students today. It's raining outside, and it reminds you of the foggy, misty, romantic atmosphere of London. When you pick up your morning coffee and paper at the local café, the guy behind the counter is very busy so you tip him extra and get a big smile from him. "What a great day to be alive! Everything's coming up roses!" On another morning, you wake up and the first thought you have is the fight you had the day before with your best friend. On top of that, you're overdrawn at the bank, your car insurance is due, and you're feeling like warm beer and burnt toast. It's raining—again! The world is gray and gloomy and depressing. That guy behind the counter keeps you waiting forever for your coffee, and when you ask him to hurry it up, he gives you attitude! So this is how the day's going to be: lousy!

The only difference between these two scenarios is your mindset. Your mental frame filters either for the positive or the negative and, once you start noticing what's wrong or what's right with the day, you become more and more aware of one to the exclusion of the other; this creates your mood. A mood is like being on a slide running downhill; you keep gathering momentum and it's difficult to change direction once you're on board.

1. Simultaneous Thinking

The cognitive filter of simultaneous thinking refers to the ability to notice sameness and difference equally rather than emphasizing one over the other. One is not better than the other, and neither is inherently positive or negative. They're just different ways of organizing information.

Have you ever noticed that some people constantly say things such as, "That's the same as ..." or "She's like ..." or "This is similar to ..." These people primarily pay attention to how something or someone is the same as something else they've experienced. They

“A book for anyone who wants a better understanding about this often-ignored aspect of human relationships and provides valuable information for therapists and coaches who work with clients having boundary issues.”

Judith E. Pearson, PhD, Licensed Professional Counsellor,
Certified Hypnotherapist, and Certified NLP Trainer

The most important distinction anyone can ever make in their life is between who they are as an individual and their connection with others. Can you truly love another and be the whole, complete and unique person you are? How do you know the difference between your fear and your partner's, or between your past anger and your here-and-now anger? The answer lies with boundaries – and this is a practical guide to unlocking these mysteries.

The book teaches you exactly what boundaries are, how to recognise when you need them and how to create and maintain them.

“This wonderful book by Anné Linden addresses a crucial aspect of human relationships. The writing is very clear, helpful, and meaningful. I believe many people can benefit from reading it.”

Stephen Gilligan, PhD, author of *The Courage to Love*

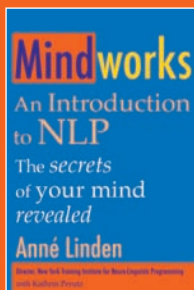
“A must for teachers, NLP trainers, and Therapists as well as lovers and parents, it will become your user's guide to successful relationships.”

Dr Susi Strang Wood, NLP Master Trainer and Psychotherapist

After 18 years as a professional actor **Anné Linden** went back to college and trained to be a psychotherapist. Anné founded the New York Training Institute for NLP and the NLP Center for Psychotherapy – the first of their kind in the world. Anné was one of the first practitioners to introduce NLP to Europe, undertaking NLP Practitioner Training in the Netherlands in 1982.

She continues to train and teach in France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

For more information visit www.nlpcenter.com



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