



Boundaries bring respect...

How do you know when someone is ‘trespassing’? For many people, frustration, irritability and anger are telling signs. You may find yourself thinking, *“Don’t they know how busy I am?”*, *“Why am I always the one who does everything?”* or *“Why do they do that to me?”*. In these situations it’s quite common to get snappy and wish everyone would just leave you alone!

Putting limits in place may mean disappointing someone in the short term, but in the long run you will get more respect and you’ll also enable others to establish their boundaries too - a true win/win situation.

Boundaries can be momentarily painful but they result in respect

What happens if you rub up against a barbed wire or accidentally touch an electric fence? It hurts! Initially it’s painful, but it also establishes respect and you are more careful next time. The same thing happens when you set a boundary around your time or something you value; when someone ‘trespasses’ it may cause surprise or even shock but they’ll soon understand that this issue demands respect.

Boundaries define limits

If you identify your own limits and make them clear, it’s easier for others to avoid overstepping the line. Imagine a farmer saying to his herd of cows, *“Now girls, be respectful of Mr Jones’ paddocks and stay out of them.”*, without having a fence up or having a border which is sometimes up and sometimes down. Invariably, ‘the girls’ are going to explore until they hit the limit. Kids and adults alike will test your limits too, until they find the border lines. If your ‘fence’ is in disrepair it makes it difficult for them to both respect you and to feel relaxed with you. Consistency makes the world a much safer place for children and adults alike.

Boundaries require maintenance

Fences need regular checks to ensure livestock stays home and unwanted things are kept out. If you find yourself feeling that people are ‘trespassing’, perhaps a ‘fence’ has fallen down and needs repair. Take a big breath and state your truth. Set realistic limits that are kind on you and keep you healthy and balanced. These don’t need to be justified. A farmer doesn’t explain to his cows why he’s put up the fence. It’s just there. A responsible landowner clearly states, *“Here is the line, please don’t cross it.”* and keeps everyone safe. Effective boundaries may cause an initial shock but they protect you and those closest to you. Only you can know your limits.

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- ✓ Angry outbursts are more likely if we allow others to ‘trespass’
- ✓ Don’t expect anyone else to maintain your boundaries – that’s your job!
- ✓ Know your limits and respect them. You can’t be everything to everyone.

“Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.”

Brene Brown

Encouraging women to develop and enjoy dynamic family relationships is Laurie’s special focus. With four children, a clinical practice and as the co-founder of Bare Hands, she understands many of the challenges of modern day families and has spent the last 30 years studying and practising strategies and skills that really make a difference.



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Practical life strategies for women