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# Setting Boundaries for Southern Women

## BASIC PRINCIPLES

Pleasing people is a kind and generous gift only when your behavior comes from a 'full well' of living a life of loving kindness toward yourself – and only when you freely choose to give or even make sacrifices with no strings attached, expecting nothing in return.

Any other pleasing behavior is either automatic, fearful, a control drama, or all three at once – and this kind of pleasing behavior is doomed to failure. It will not make you more loved, it will not make another person happier. It will simply build seeds of resentment, and it will, ironically, keep your relationships superficial and distant.



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*A boundary is an energetic line between your feelings and responsibilities and someone else's.*

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And, here is the gospel truth: Setting boundaries is a kind and honorable thing to do. It is not selfish. It is not 'mean.' It will allow you and your relationships to blossom. It will allow your loved ones to learn what they need to learn.

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### ***EIGHT STEPS TO SETTING BOUNDARIES:***

1. Honor your anger.
2. Develop a **strategic retreat**.
3. Separate your feelings from others' feelings.
4. Make sure you're dealing with a reasonable person.
5. Watch your word count.
6. Honor your boundaries with your behavior.
7. Tolerate the tension of disappointing others.
8. Celebrate the people who truly love you.

## WHY DO WE FAIL TO SET BOUNDARIES?

***“But I said I would.”***

In rigid, dysfunctional systems, it's not ok to change your mind. In truth, it's essential that you are free to change your mind.

***“I want to be a good worker, wife, mother, girlfriend, or sister...”***

You are good. What if there is nothing else to prove?

***“I don't want to be rude.”***

Why not? These rules about polite, pleasing behavior do not serve you. And, you can politely decline....

***“It's good to be needed.”***

Is it? Or, is this belief a window into your tendency to under-value who you are, without doing one blessed thing more...?

***“I don't have any excuse.”***

Why do you need one? Your desire to care for yourself is reason enough.

***“I want them to like/love me.”***

You cannot make someone love you.

***“I should be kind and loving.”***

What could be more loving than respecting yourself, and your loved ones?

***“I don't want to hurt/disappoint someone I love.”***

Why not? That may be exactly what he/she needs, in order to grow. Oh, and – you, too....

***“If you want something done right, do it yourself.”***

This is a Control Drama. And, it's not true. It's a trap, honey....

***“I want to keep my job.”***

Are you sure? Get very, very clear about what your job is costing you. And, you may be dramatizing the consequences of being yourself on the job....

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*In the South, we have elevated taking on others' needs to an art form of pleasantry, indirectness, and manipulative behavior.*

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## A FEW TIPS ABOUT BOUNDARIES:

- \* You cannot set boundaries for other people.
- \* You cannot make them honor promises or have courage.
- \* “Push Back” from other people does not mean the boundary ‘didn't work’ – indeed, it probably means just the opposite.
- \* In any system, if one person over-functions, then another person under-functions.
- \* Control is always an illusion.
- \* Honoring Boundaries is a sacred practice, in which you recognize the Divine in you and your responsibility to be a steward of your energy. You cannot ‘fix’ other people, but you can inspire them....