



September News

An important component of successful relationships is the acknowledgment and respect of individual boundaries. This month's News focuses on *Boundaries* and includes some brief but important tips on identifying and maintaining healthy boundaries in all of your relationships. For more on this broad topic, I would recommend Anne Katherine's book "Where to Draw the Line: How to Set Healthy Boundaries Every Day". Alternatively, simply try our exercises below and watch your 'boundary muscles' grow stronger day by day.

Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

Have you ever found yourself feeling anxious or uncomfortable after a seemingly innocent interaction with another individual and not known why you felt that way? Have friends, family, coworkers (or even strangers) ever asked a question that you felt was personal but you answered it anyway so as not to make *them* feel uncomfortable by refusing? Have you ever had someone stand too close or seem to touch you inappropriately? When you took a step backward, or made attempts to avoid their touch, did they move in closer and/or continue touching you?

The above situations relate to our emotional or physical boundaries being crossed by others. For many of us, it can be a struggle to maintain boundaries, even if we are clear on where our boundaries lie. Sometimes it can be easier to say "no" to a stranger than it can be to speak openly to our loved ones or co-workers about what makes us feel uncomfortable. At other times, we may not trust our intuition about a situation or have difficulty placing our own needs above, or at least equal to, another's. However, allowing our boundaries to be violated, even in the smallest of ways, is damaging to all parties involved; it is destructive to our self-esteem AND limits the growth of the individual who is doing the violating.

To help you establish and communicate your boundaries more clearly, try these simple exercises:

1. **Build and maintain your foundation.** Spend some time increasing your self-awareness. Start by asking yourself these questions and journaling your responses. What qualities do I want in a friend or a partner? What is important about these qualities?





What are my core passions, values and beliefs? How do I express my core passions, values and beliefs in my interactions with others? What values, beliefs or attitudes most guide me in my daily decision making processes? How do I express myself physically? What choices do I make about physical closeness with others? Then briefly describe a vision of yourself with healthy emotional and physical boundaries.

2. **Check your fences.** For the next week, observe yourself in interactions with others, keeping in mind your findings from #1 and the following questions: In which areas are my boundaries blurred (for example, emotional, physical, spiritual, cultural, etc.)? In what areas are my boundaries strongest? When are my boundaries most blurred i.e. in interactions with strangers, co-workers, bosses, friends, family members or my spouse? Note what is your experience of maintaining a boundary. Note what is your experience of having a boundary violated. Don't try to fix anything at this point, just observe. Journal your findings if you wish.
3. **Develop a strategic plan to keep your turf safe.** Start small with the easiest situations and work your way up. Try the following strategic plan or develop one for yourself:
 - a. *Choose one area or relationship to direct your focus.* (For our purposes we will use the example of a nosy neighbour who asks too many personal questions about your comings and goings).
 - b. *Determine if there are strategies that are already working for you in other areas where your boundaries are strongest.* Decide if you can apply any of these strategies to your current area of focus.
 - c. *Visualize yourself maintaining your boundaries.* Using our example, visualize yourself responding to your neighbour's questions in a way that maintains a comfortable boundary for you. You may use humour to deflate a personal question such as "Okay I admit it. I have been seeing George Clooney on the side!" Or you may answer their question with another question: "Good question. What would you do?" Alternatively, you could defer answering the question until a later time: "You will be the first to know once I have it figured out." However, as you may have already experienced, using humour or deflection can lead to ongoing questioning. So, if you wish to be more direct and discourage your neighbour's line of questioning for good, you could visualize yourself saying the following: "I am very flattered that you are interested but I'm a very private person so, *for me*, it does not feel comfortable to discuss the details of this situation. Thanks." In any event, by visualizing the outcome you want, when the questions come you will be ready.
 - d. *Practice, practice, practice.* Maintaining boundaries seems like it should be simple but it is not. For those times when you are not as successful as you might wish, rather than beat yourself up, analyze the situation and use it to learn and improve. For example, re-live the interaction (either by visualizing it, journaling it and/or discussing the situation with a friend), then replace in your mind's eye unwanted behaviours or language with behaviours and/or language which allow you to maintain a healthy boundary. Feel your imagined success!
 - e. *Get support if you need it and stand your ground.* You may find the people in your life reacting to your establishing more defined emotional and physical boundaries; they may even begin to distance themselves from you...that is okay! You are respecting yourself and how great does that feel!? If you need help staying on track, talk your challenges through with a professional or someone you know who maintains their boundaries well.

Note: If you are currently suffering physical or emotional abuse in any of your relationships or have experienced significant boundaries violations from childhood, these simple exercises will not be enough. In these cases, I encourage you to seek the services of a trained psychotherapist to assist you with your recovery and to help you establish safe boundaries.

UPCOMING SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS



NOTE: There are no spaces available in other workshops offered by Hina Coaching & Seminars this fall. However, the following remain open for registration:

FREE IMAGO INFORMATION EVENINGS

HELD THE LAST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

These Information Sessions are for **Singles and Couples** and introduce **IMAGO**, the work of **Oprah's** favourite relationship therapist: Dr. Harville Hendrix (author of "Getting the Love You Want").

During the introductory session, you will find what you can do **NOW** to create the relationship of your dreams!

Next Session: Wednesday September 30th 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
@ Ravenswood Studio, North Vancouver

Please Register On-Line
www.hinacoaching.com

UNDERSTANDING IMAGO

LOVING RELATIONSHIPS FOR SINGLES AND COUPLES

Sunday Series Wellness Workshops
Sunday, October 25th, 2009
12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
@ Body Harmony Yoga Studio
#301 - 972 Marine Drive, North Vancouver
www.bodyharmony.ca

Cost: \$20.00 per person

Come join me in the tranquility of the Body Harmony Yoga Studio to explore:

- **What is Imago?**
- **Why does Imago work so well?**
- **What are some predictable stages of relationships?**
- **What can I do to improve my ability to deal with conflict in a relationship?**

Pre-Registration is Required

TO REGISTER call 604-929-9642 or email: lori@bodyharmony.ca

If you want to experience more of Imago, I would highly encourage *couples* to take one of the *Getting the Love You Want* workshops offered here in Vancouver (visit www.imagovancouver.com for dates and more details). Or, for more information about Imago workshops for *singles* visit www.gettingtheloveyouwant.com.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

"A little change can have a big result"



This month we dedicate The Butterfly Effect section to the memory of Ann Ryan

~April 11, 1937 to April 15, 2009~

You can shed tears that she is gone
Or you can smile because she has lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all she's left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
Or you can be full of the love you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember her and only that she's gone
Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what she'd want
Smile, open your eyes, love and go on.



Katie Barr, B.Sc. (PT)
Certified Relationship Coach (C)
Hina Coaching & Seminars
www.hinacoaching.com
778-772-9066