



# I Set a Boundary - Now What?

Anticipating and allowing other people's feelings

## Objectives

- ▲ Anticipate consequences that might come from setting and honoring your boundary. Identify circumstances in which you would consider redefining or changing your boundary.
- ▲ Notice when your fear of other people's feelings has you wavering.
- ▲ Practice an approach to allowing other people to have their emotions without making it mean something about you.

In this worksheet, we are picking up where we left off with Boundary basics.

If you've been working on defining, communicating and enforcing boundaries,  
*what have you noticed?*

*Do you find yourself focusing on what other people think? Or trying to direct or control their response?*

*If you don't get a response in real time, do you find yourself imagining that they are upset, and spinning out about that?*

If so - **you still have work to do**

and that's OK!

Let's dig in.



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## WHAT ARE YOU MAKING IT MEAN ABOUT YOU?

Very often, we interpret someone else's feelings or actions as an indication of our worthiness or adequacy.

### Here are some examples of how that might show up:

- Attending interrupts your presentation on rounds, changing the plan. You think "I must be doing a terrible job".
- Your kid says they miss you, and cries when you drop them off at school. You think "My kid is so upset, a good parent wouldn't upset their kid"
- Your friend seems distracted on the phone, you think "she must be mad at me".

If you take a step back, you can see that these are **thoughts**. They are a myopic way of making sense of the interaction or the relationship.

But in the moment, it's easy to believe those thoughts are *facts*.

You ARE doing a bad job at work, you ARE a bad parent, and your friend IS mad at you.

And from there, the only way to feel better is to change the way they see you (or feel, or act) so that you can feel better and more secure in the relationship. This shows up as trying to manipulate their feelings or behavior so you can feel good again.

An exhausting, and unwinnable task!



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## This might look like...

- Doubling down to prove yourself to your attending, defending your initial plan, and over explaining to make sure they know why you proposed what you did.
- Showering your kid with gifts or treats, hoping they'll forget that you're working so much.
- Asking "are you mad at me" over and over, or apologizing for something you didn't do to get them to tell you you're all good.

The downside to this is **it's hard to stop**.

If the only way we can feel good is if other people like us, not only will we exhaust ourselves trying, but we will also learn that **it's not possible**.

The other downside is that if we try to prevent other people from having their emotions, we enforce the idea that some emotions are not OK or safe for them to feel around you. As you now know, after many months in BT, ALL emotions are valid. Even for other people.

**Describe a time when you made someone else's emotions mean something about you, your worth, or your value.**

**Get as granular as you can. What were the circumstances?  
What emotion do you think they were feeling?**



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**What did you make this mean about you?**

**What else could it have meant?**

**Does it serve you to keep your original interpretation of their emotions?  
Why or why not?**

**How might it serve you to imagine a different interpretation of their  
emotion?**



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**How do you want to think about this next time?**

**How would you feel if you were able to think that way?**

**What would you do differently?**

**Has there ever been a time when someone else tried to make you feel good when you really just needed to feel bad?  
What did they do/say? How did that feel to you?**



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**What would you have wanted from them instead?**

**How could knowing this about yourself help you offer the same to someone else?**

**Think about someone going through a hard time. What would it look like to stop trying to fix things for them, and hold space for them instead?**