

BARBARA HILL

BOUNDARIES 101

Defining Healthy Boundaries in Relationships



WHAT ARE BOUNDARIES?

➤ According to Dr. Cloud, a boundary is defined as:

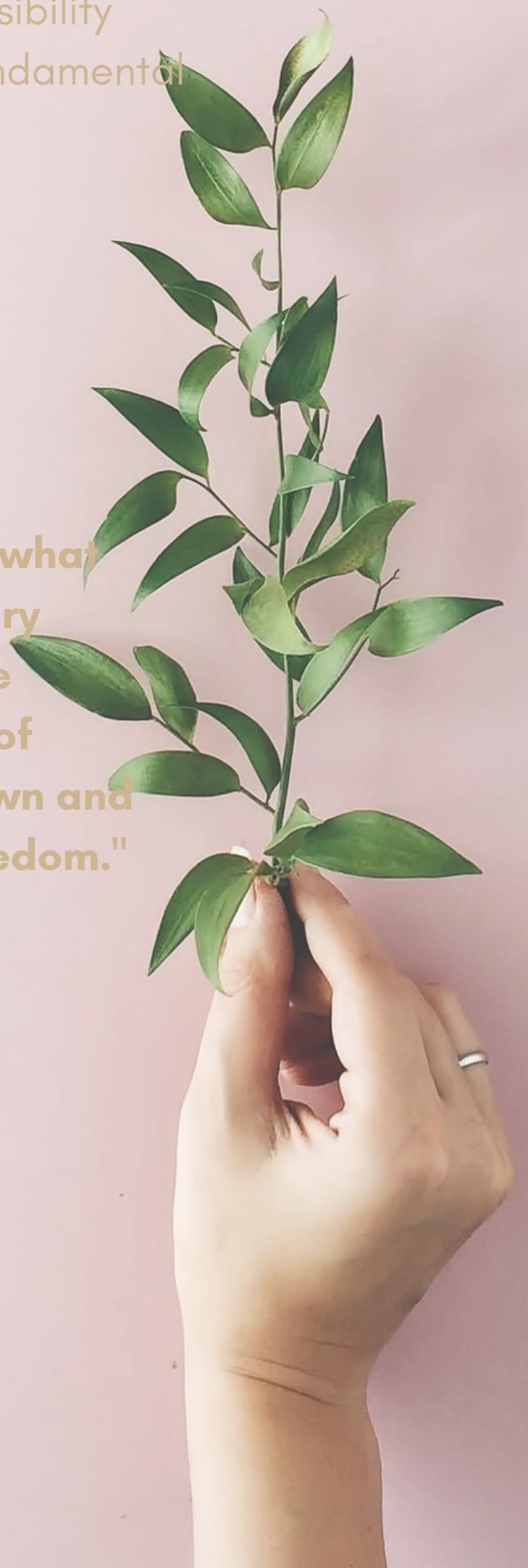
“A personal property line that marks those things for which we are responsible. In other words, boundaries define who we are and who we are not.”

➤ Boundaries include this idea of responsibility and ownership, and asks these two fundamental questions:

- *What is ours and what is not?*
- *Who are we and who aren't we?*

➤ Dr. Henry Cloud says,

“Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom.”



WHAT is the difference between being responsible TO someone and being responsible FOR someone?

» When you're on a physical property of land, there are visible markers (i.e. a tree, a fence etc.) that help us to know where our land begins and where it ends. In relationships, these markers are *invisible* and therefore can be much trickier to navigate.

If we follow the analogy we could imagine that if we were to cross into someone else's property uninvited and started washing their car or painting their fence pink they would have a serious problem with that.

The funny thing is we do this in our relationships all the time.

» We cross those invisible boundary lines and...

- Take on burdens that aren't ours to bear.
- Speak our mind when we should hold our tongue.
- Stay quiet when we should speak up.



WHAT INFORMS OUR BOUNDARIES?

1. Experiences with Caregivers/Parents
2. Attachment Style
3. Conflict Resolution Style

➤ **Experiences** are powerful and inform our beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

➤ **Attachment Style:** Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby, a British psychoanalyst who was trying to understand why children became upset when they were separated from their parents.

Attachment theory asks this fundamental question:

Is the attachment figure NEARBY, ACCESSIBLE AND ATTENTIVE?

“YES” = loved, secure, and confident.

“NO” = feelings of anxiousness and avoidance.

The answers to these questions inform the three different attachment styles:

- Secure
- Anxious
- Avoidant



➤ **Conflict Resolution Styles:**

There are **five** major styles of conflict management—collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising.

1. **Collaborating Style:** A combination of assertive and cooperative.

2. **Competing Style:** Assertive and uncooperative.

3. **Avoiding Style:** Tends to be unassertive and uncooperative.

4. **Accommodating Style:** There is an element of self-sacrifice when accommodating to satisfy the other person.

5. **Compromising Style:** This style aims to find a mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties.

➤ **In Review:** Experiences with parents
--> Attachment Style --> Conflict Style
--> Boundary Style



What are the different types of Boundary Styles?

Porous and Rigid Boundaries

➤ Rigid:

- o Shows unwillingness to listen to someone else's views after you have made a decision.
- o Finds it difficult to compromise or be flexible.
- o Typically, doesn't ask for other people's opinions or input.

➤ Distant:

- o Find it hard to connect with others.
- o Retreat into your own world.
- o Don't initiate contact with others, you wait for them to be open or inviting to you.

➤ Intrusive:

- o Entering conversations without waiting for appropriate openings.
- o Good at convincing other people to do what you want them to do.
- o Gives advice, comments or feedback even though they don't want/didn't ask for it.



Porous Boundaries:

➤ Invisible:

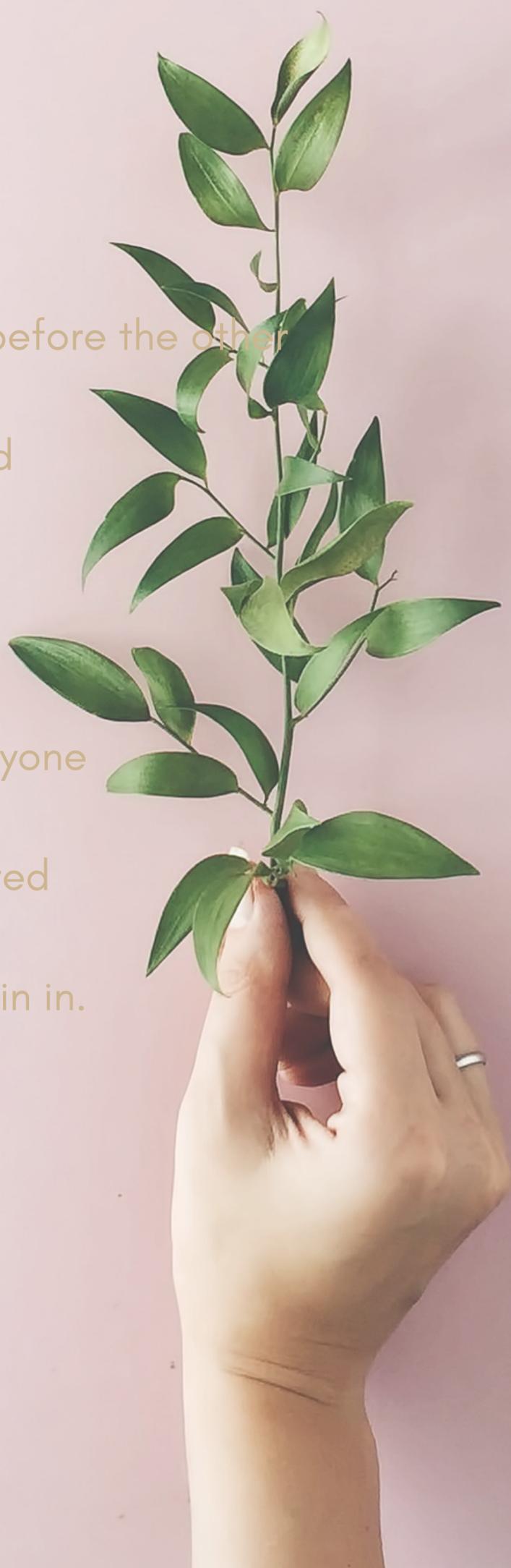
- o There are many things you want or need that you do not bring up to others
- o You bring things up in an indirect, subtle or low-key way.
- o You are resentful about how much and how often you give in.

➤ Enmeshed:

- o You feel joy or pain through others experiences as if they were your own.
- o You initiate contact in relationships before the other person has a chance to miss you.
- o You are uncomfortable when you and your friend have opposing opinions.

➤ Hyper-receptive:

- o Your radar is set to be aware of everyone else's feelings and needs.
- o Your actions are shaped and motivated by others desires and needs.
- o You wait for others to invite you to join in.



HOW DO WE CREATE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS?

➤ Experiences in our relationships have created narratives.

OLD STORY = UNHEALTHY BOUNDARY
NEW STORY = HEALTHY BOUNDARY

➤ **What is the OLD story that has been fueling unhealthy boundaries in relationships?**

THAT CAUSES US TO...

- Hold people captive.
- Chase and pursue them.
- Avoid them.

In moments of insecurity, fear, or rejection we have the choice to **TAKE THE BAIT** our old narrative is feeding us, or the bait that's coming from another person's old story.

If I take the bait of my own old story OR the bait of someone else's I won't be able to uphold my own healthy boundaries or be true to myself.

➤ **What is the NEW story that empowers us to operate in relationships in a healthy way?**

THAT EMPOWERS US TO...

- Release them to their own process.
- Not take the bait and rest.
- Soften and embrace others in vulnerability.



Reflections:

