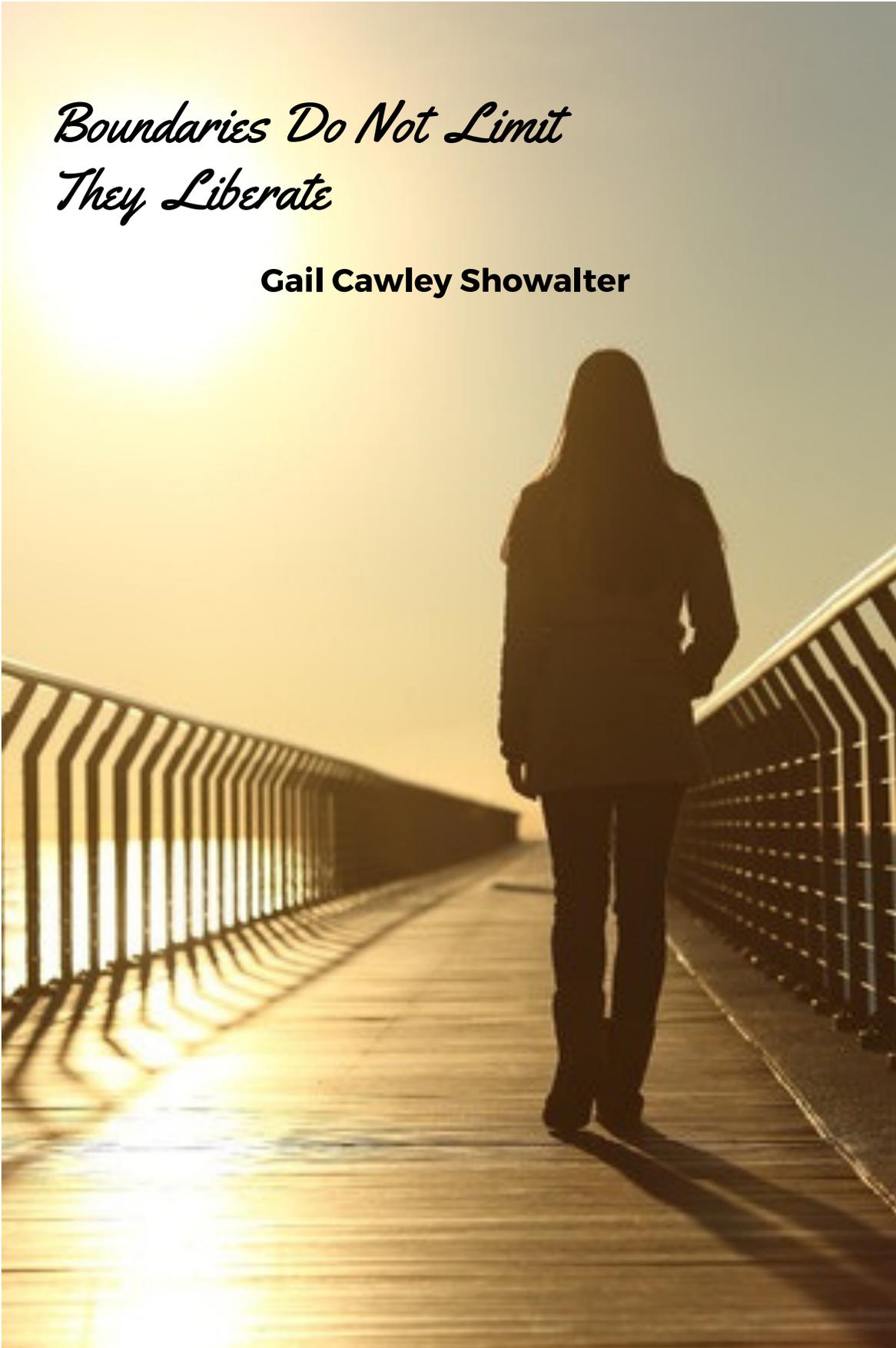


*Boundaries Do Not Limit
They Liberate*

Gail Cawley Showalter



Boundaries Do Not Limit, They Liberate

What if I told you—this one topic can change your life forever? Healthy boundaries bring a level of success to those who have them. Women often have difficulties in this area. Unhealthy or nonexistent boundaries are the source of many of the issues that I notice when I coach women. Boundaries are also the source of many of the difficulties that I notice when I talk with single mothers.

What are boundaries?

We usually think of boundaries as fences or barriers to keep us out of an area. In truth personal boundaries come as the result of healthy thinking and a strong self-esteem. When you are sure of yourself and have confidence you will not have too much trouble setting boundaries. And when you do you will free yourself to spend your energies as you should and not in ways that others demand you do.

Do you tend to let yourself be pushed around? Do you give in even when it goes against your better judgment? At work do you know what your responsibilities are? Or do you find yourself taking on responsibilities of others when asked? Are you the one your coworkers ask to cover for them because they know you can't say no? Are you a people pleaser to your own detriment?

Psychological boundaries are the thoughts and opinions that we hold. Do you shift yours when under pressure from others? Do you allow yourself to be controlled by the opinions of others? Or are you on the other side of the fence—you try to force your own way of thinking on others?

From [Allison Bottke's *Setting Boundaries for Women*](#):

In order to set healthy boundaries, we must develop [emotional authenticity](#). We must do some deep self-introspection and address significant life issues at the core of our being—issues such as pain from our past, codependency, depression, domestic violence, childhood abuse, alcoholism, divorce, unhappy marriages, addictions, and bipolar disorders. (Bottke, 2013, p. 36)

Healthy personal boundaries keep us from bad habits, help us eat healthy, and prevent illness. They also build respect on the job and establish clear expectations.

Difficulties often start in childhood.

Abuse as a child crosses the most personal of boundaries – skin. Women's difficulties often begin in childhood. Child abuse crosses the most personal of boundaries—skin. Our first/earliest boundary is our skin. It is our largest organ and protects us. When a young girl is physically or sexually abused her physical boundary is violated. From her young point of view she has no boundaries. She learned early she wasn't allowed to say no. Some women overcome this, but for many it is a lifelong struggle. For some women difficulty with boundaries began in childhood. Others may suffer with weak boundaries as a result of troublesome relationships.

As [Rebecca Fein](#), the founder and owner of Fein Life Coaching says, " One thing that has always amazed me is the way people view setting boundaries. People view setting boundaries as being mean, cruel, and/or having other negative connotations. People also view it as something done only to hurt other people."

The child grows into adolescence believing she doesn't have a right to have personal boundaries. She gets confused about sexuality. Healthy boundaries have to do with responsibility for one's self and limit setting. If a little girl has never been treated with respect she isn't likely to respect herself.

Healthy Boundaries have to do with: Responsibility for one's self and limit setting

The Boundary Setting Battle can be observed in two Categories:

1 Outside resistance—from others

2 Inside resistance-from ourselves

The following questions will help you know if you have weak boundaries:

- Do you always answer a ringing phone?
- Are you able to withdraw from an unpleasant conversation?
- Do you agree to something and then resent it later?
- Are you able to maintain healthy workable relationship with father of your children?
- Do members of your family make unreasonable demands on your time?
- Do you overindulge men and their desires where you are concerned?
- Do you fully realize that "NO" is a complete sentence?

Specific Signs that you need a boundary:

- You resent a responsibility you volunteered for or couldn't figure a way out of.
- You find yourself justifying or defending a choice or action.
- You are taking on responsibility that belongs to someone else.
- Family members hold favors they have done for you over your head.
- Friends or family guilt-trip you and take advantage of you.

If guilt is a frequent part of your life consider evaluating your inner boundaries. One way to overcome guilt is to take ownership of your life. According to Cloud and Townsend, "People who own their lives do not feel guilty when they make choices about where they are going" *Boundaries*. (Cloud & Townsend, 1992, p. 130)

Healthy boundaries can make all aspects of your life better. Detaching with love is often required to create harmony or simply to give you space for healing. Once established the new boundaries will give you peace of mind and spirit. You will own your own life.

You can plan for a future of your choice.

Businesses have strategic plans. A strategic plan is a deliberate and intentional plan for each step of a business or endeavor. I find that women are more likely to go through life letting things happen to them than they are making intentional plans. As I look back I must admit that I lived through most of my life in default mode. I just took life as it came, almost thinking I had no choices.

Back to Strategic Planning – having a plan is usually a good thing. It helps to avoid unpleasant surprises and gives you something to work towards. To have a good plan you must first have a goal or goals. Your goal is the end result of your efforts. It is what you want to achieve. A degree from college would be a goal. Once you've set a goal your next step is to write out the steps required to achieve that goal. This is just one of the things I do with the women I coach.

For now concentrate on setting boundaries in *your* life.

I encourage you to take charge of your own life, to make a plan, to set goals. And to definitely set boundaries. Boundaries are beneficial for you and your family. Boundaries build a stable home. Boundaries create a healthy emotional environment. Imagine a home in which there were no boundaries.

- Children could eat anything at any time.
- There is no bedtime.
- There are no rules regarding each other's privacy.
- Money belonged to whoever took it.
- It didn't matter how you spoke to one another.
- If a person felt like hitting another family member they could.

Well you get the idea. There are boundaries of all sorts in our society. And they are for our good. They are not walls to keep people out. They are simply restrictions we choose to implement to keep our lives civil and to keep us well balanced.

What are sensible boundaries? There are so many I can only address a few here.

Issues regarding your personal life:

- You have the right to keep personal things, personal. Meaning you are not obligated to answer questions, even from your mother, if you feel they are overstepping a boundary.
- Your home is *your* domain-if *you* are paying for it. You determine who enters, sleeps, or eats there.
- Your business is just that-your business. Unless you ask for advice, you are not in any way obligated to share it. We are all familiar with the phrase, "It's none of your business." It may sound rude, but so is the person asking the nosey question.
- Your money is yours to spend as you see fit, as long as *you* are earning it and don't owe others. You own it.
- You are not responsible for others' financial decisions. Parents often get caught with this one. We want what is best for our children and too often we rescue them from their poor choices. Once in a while this could be necessary. Most of the time we are enabling them and doing them no favors.

You are the only one who can do set your boundaries. It cannot be done for you. To motivate yourself:

-Imagine a life in which you have the calm home where your children feel safe.

-Imagine a day where you have the time to get everything done that you know needs doing. *Because you aren't wasting any time on Facebook or games, etc.*

-Imagine a full week of evenings with your children when there is no dissension, arguing, or resistance.

-Imagine harmony in your life.

Goal – a life without guilt, old baggage affecting your choices, being stuck and unable to move forward.

Start building healthy boundaries with small steps.

When you think you are ready to make changes—beware. Setting boundaries is serious business. Don't try it alone. You'll need support to make these life changes. "Don't even try to start setting limits until you have entered into deep, abiding attachments with people who will love you no matter what." from *Boundaries*. (Cloud & Townsend, 1992, p. 66)

Have friendly support.

Before you set a boundary have a reliable friend for support. *Do not try this alone*. Have a *plan* with a real life friend. Tell your friend what you are going to do. For example, "The next time he calls or texts I'm not going to answer." Or "The next time she asks me to watch her child I'm going to say I'm not available." You might even practice with your friend. Prepare yourself beforehand for a reaction. Know that the reaction may not be pleasant. People are accustomed to your previous actions. When you change they won't like it. It is important that you have kind and friendly support during these days.

Prepare for resistance.

Resistance is painful. We know we should, but . . .It will mean war. It will mean anger. It will mean silent treatment. It will mean being rejected.

During the time my ex-husband and I were separated he was starting a new business, with his female office assistant. I was mothering three young children and managing our home. One day I went to the location where they were working. The children were in the car with me. In the parking lot I was attempting to have a reasonable conversation with him as he stood outside the window next to the car. I said something that suggested a boundary issue. If I raised my voice a decibel, I don't recall. He reacted as if I were screaming and condescendingly said, "Don't do this in

front of the children,” completely turning the situation onto me. I didn’t fully realize at the time what had happened.

So often the intimidator will make the one setting a boundary appear as if they are the one who is being unreasonable.

As my personal situation progressed toward divorce I would get physically ill every time he came to pick up the children for his visitation. Just seeing him made me nauseous. I made a bold move to set a boundary for myself. I asked a girlfriend to be at the house when he arrived. She was more than happy to do this. He came at the pointed time and when he realized I was not coming to greet him he became angry.

External boundaries are easier to identify than our internal ones.

Be prepared for the controller to resist when you set a boundary.

Cloud and Townsend make several points about angry reactions.

- The angry person is the one with the problem.
- Anger is only a feeling inside the other person.
- Do not let their anger be a cue for you to do something. *There is great power in inactivity.* (Italics are mine.)
- Have a support system and a plan in place.
- Do not allow the angry person to get you angry.
- Be prepared to use physical distance and other limits that enforce consequences.

(Cloud & Townsend, 1992, p. 248-249)

All of this involves risk. Sometimes risk is necessary in dealing with angry people.

Other types of external resistance include:

- Guilt-people with poor boundaries will receive guilt messages that are directed towards them. Tips for dealing with external messages:

Recognize guilt messages.

Guilt messages are really anger in disguise.

Guilt messages hide sadness and hurt.

If guilt works on you, recognize that this is your problem and not theirs.

Do not explain or justify.

Be assertive and interpret their messages as being about their feelings.

- Consequences and countermoves-controlling people, sometimes parents of grown children, may use this way of resisting boundaries. (Cloud & Townsend, 1992, p. 251-253)

First consider what you will lose versus what you may gain. *My thoughts: This may mean a serious breach within your immediate family. Be prepared.*

- Decide if you are willing to risk the loss.
- Be diligent about making up for what you have (or may have) lost.
- Do it. Go through with your plans.
- Understand that the hard part is just beginning.

Physical resistance, Pain of Others, Blamers, Real needs, Forgiveness and reconciliation. *I cannot fully address the material in the book here. Just know that there may be resistance that involves physical abuse, personal pain of those you love, people who will place all the blame on you. And realize that forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Forgiveness involves one person; reconciliation requires two.*

Resistance is used to create strength and muscle when we workout. It should not be surprising that it is through resistance that we grow stronger spiritually.

How can you set boundaries with difficult people?

Women coming out of a relationship with an intimidator or overbearing man can be afraid to establish healthy boundaries. She may have been programmed to please at the expense of her own desires. She may not even realize what has happened. My

marriage left me confused after ten years with a strong intimidating man. I know he would not agree, intimidators seldom do, that I adapted to his way of doing most everything. Once I began to change and say no the relationship changed.

Another situation occurs when a woman feels vulnerable. She attempts to make all things right or perfect. She may think she is safe from criticism as long as she is in control. I often felt that way. Confusion between boundaries and rigid walls causes problems.

I believe healthy boundaries begin internally. They start with our thoughts. (Video of "Thoughts on Thinking") Everyone is so different-how we think in a given situation will be different.

It is important to understand Personalities.

My study of personalities helped me greatly when dealing with other people. Once you can accept that another's traits are a part of who they are, just as your own traits are part of who you are, it's easier to allow others to be themselves. Thank goodness we aren't all alike.

Understanding personalities is a source of understanding of the differences we all have. Our emotional needs are related to our personality types. Identifying personalities is an asset for dealing with difficult people as well. When we understand a person's motivation it is much easier to communicate or work with them. We all have motivators and it helps when we recognize it. I believe that understanding personalities helps when setting boundaries. When you know more about why the other person is doing whatever it is they are doing you can determine the best approach to setting boundaries with them.

Recognize the reality of the situation.

When our granddaughter, Kaylin, was three, our daughter, had gotten into the habit of describing dirty or unpleasant items as nasty. "Ouh, That's naaasteee," she would

say. One day as they entered the public ladies' room in a local discount store several Gothic girls were leaving. One held the door for Kaylin who froze in the entrance, transfixed. She looked directly at the girl in black with black lipstick, dyed black hair, and numerous facial piercings and proclaimed loudly, just as she had heard her mother do, "Ouh, you're naaasteee!"

In our world there are some 'nasty' people and the majority don't display it so you can see them coming. In fact, most of the nasty people I've dealt with are well disguised. We do not have the luxury of simply avoiding the 'nasties' that cross our paths. If they are co-workers you have to function with them on a professional level. If they are in-laws you are stuck with them at least occasionally. If they are your ex and the father of your children you would be wise to devise a plan. Maybe you are like I was, constantly trying to figure out what the problem was, how to reason with these people. Even, thinking *what's wrong with me that I can't work this out?*

If you find yourself in a place where you must deal with nasty people it helps to identify where boundaries are being breached. These questions will give you a starting point.

Most people function out of their *needs*. Determine what your nasty person needs. Does she crave attention? Does she need recognition? A wise counselor once told me when dealing with a difficult person: "Speak to her in exactly the same way she speaks to you, then give her what she *needs*." Some people have a personality disorder. Notice if others are having trouble with the person. Does she behave in the same nasty manner with other people? Do others show that they have a problem with the person? If so, you can rest easy, it's not you. Once in a while you may find yourself in a situation with a malignant narcissist, or an 'invalidator,' a truly nasty person, as described by Jay Carter, a psychologist, in his book, *Nasty People*. Ask yourself; does the person ever mention God? Does she demonstrate *pride* in her conversation? Does she have an

unrelenting will especially when related to her positions or work projects? Does she project onto others her own guilt?

M. Scott Peck, M.D., a psychiatrist and best selling author of many books including *The Road Less Traveled*, wrote an entire book about such people. His title, *People of the Lie*, explains "the essential psychological problem of human evil," to be "a particular variety of narcissism." (Peck, 1983, p. 77) These individuals are characterized by an "unsubmitted will." They manipulate and control others to their advantage. They refuse to submit to God, their own conscience or any other human being. According to Peck "There are only two states of being: submission to God and goodness or the refusal to submit to anything beyond one's own will—which refusal automatically enslaves one to the forces of evil." (Peck, 1983, p. 83)

If all *nasties* were as obvious as the Gothics my granddaughter classified as such, life would be easier. (And I'm not saying all Gothics are nasty people. So no emails on that, please.) Usually, however, they appear to be intelligent, responsible, hard-working people. The evil is subtle and well disguised. You may notice that those associated with the nasty person are not in as good a condition as the nasty one is. Nasty may appear to be *Nice*.

One boundary establishing technique that can work is to place the situation back in the Nasty's lap. "When you give him the responsibility for his actions, an invalidator will almost always back down," according to Carter, "*the best you can do is (1) point it out, (2) stand your ground, or (3) disconnect if he is not willing to see it.*" (Carter, 1989, p. 41)

This is all much more difficult than it may appear to be. Nasty people make life unpleasant and often unmanageable. With confidence and determination you can overcome their poison. Take off your rose-colored glasses. See clearly the person you are dealing with. Deflect whatever they toss your way. Respect the person that you

are and know that you have the right to receive respect. You are the strong one.

“Only the weak are cruel. Gentleness can only be expected from the strong.”

– Leo Buscaglia

Setting boundaries with children prepares them for life.

In *Setting Boundaries for Women* by Allison Bottke the difference between helping and enabling is explained this way:

Helping is doing something for someone that he is not capable of doing himself. *Enabling* is doing something for someone that he could and should be doing himself. (Bottke, 2013, p. 49)

Women seem to fall into this trap-over helping and justifying it. We don't know whether we are helping or enabling. Then we find ourselves in situations that drain us. Bottke says we enable for various reasons like:

- We have confused helping with enabling.
- We love too much, too little, too dependently, or too conditionally.
- We feel guilty.
- What we're doing is all we know to do. (Bottke, 2013, p. 52-53)

You can begin today, this very minute to do things differently. Evaluate your situation and make the hard decisions to Help, not Enable.

People pleasing moms don't do their children a favor.

People pleasers avoid receiving help from others but search for people they can fix. Mothers who are pleasers walk a narrow path to keep from rescuing and enabling their children. They often think they are supposed to fix things for their children. Mothers are naturally wired to protect their young and they should. All the time remaining aware that the primary goal is to raise a mature and stable adult. The question is, when and

how do we know what to do or what not to do? [Dr. James Dobson](#) used to say, "Never do for a child what he/she can do for himself/herself."

I've had occasion to think more recently about parents who want to be friends with their children. They don't want their children to think of them as mean. They take it personally when a preschooler says, "I hate you." The parent who doesn't set boundaries for their children will never control the gate when the child is an adolescent. Boundaries are not fortresses. Boundaries are protection. Children who are not given this protection are frequently the ones who abuse the personal space of others.

I may see this as a more serious problem having taught school for many years, several of those in secondary public schools. What I experienced in the halls and classrooms, several years back, made me even more determined that my own children would respect authority and the rules that make our civilization with all its faults work as well as it does. I recall a student that was frequently tardy to first period in a ninth grade class I taught. One day he made the mistake of saying to me, "I can't help it. My mother didn't wake me up." On that particular day he had hit my last nerve. I emphatically told him and of course the rest of the class, "I have three children at home. They get themselves out of bed and ready for school. My ten year old prepares her own breakfast. And my two sons, younger than her, get themselves to the bus stop by 7:30. Don't tell me it's your mother's fault you are late for school." He was never late again.

There is a reason elders are put in the position of authority. Not because they are always right or perfect or above reproach but primarily because they have lived longer in this world and paid the dues that put them there.

Children who are taught respect make it over the hurdles with much more ease than those who think the world owes them a lift when they approach those obstacles in life.

Hurdles are not roadblocks. The process of growing to adulthood requires learning how to maneuver hurdles. Then it demands that we all learn how to take detours when the real roadblocks prevent our progress.

Every single mother knows about the obstacles and has experienced at least a few roadblocks. But if you are the lone parent it is difficult to be the boundary setter. Perhaps it would be easier to think of them as protection posts along the fence. Thinking long term—what do you want to hear your adult child say to you? “Mom, I hate you for *not* teaching me how the world works!” or “Mom, I appreciate the lessons that prepared me for the realities of life.”

Parents’ primary responsibility is to prepare children for adulthood. Since babies have absolutely no comprehension of what life on earth will be like it is up to their parents to carefully guide them through stages of development. Protecting children comes naturally. Setting boundaries isn’t as easy. When babies are defiant parents think they are cute and harmless. Little children are constantly learning. As they walk and reach for everything in sight toddlers begin to test the limits. Parents are supposed to set those limits. (There are limits; you need to say no appropriately.)

Boundaries on the job are crucial.

A job is something you do in exchange for money, usually. Money is something you use to feed, clothe, and provide shelter for yourself and your family. Sounds simple, doesn’t it? Many of us make more out of the job than we should. We think it is our identity, our self-worth, and our security blanket. Some of us take our work so seriously that we tend to forget that we aren’t meant to fix the world. Boundaries in your area of work are important for establishing harmony in your home. I grew up in a family that was highly productive. The men in my life have all been extremely hard workers and have provided well for their families. My dad had to quit school in the eighth grade to

pick cotton. His father owned cotton gins and every hand was needed. He did well in spite of his limited formal education, but it bothered him greatly and he felt inferior most of his life. He passed his work ethic and productivity down to his children. Some of us can be a bit obsessive about our work at times. Work can become such a driving force that the important things in life are neglected. I fell naturally onto this track. I happen to thoroughly enjoy the work I am fortunate enough to do now. That, however, was not always the case. At a time when work became my all-consuming sense of self, I did not realize what was happening to me. In my most productive years I experienced delivering babies, producing Braille, and surviving burnout. Balance and boundaries make work a less stressful and more enriching part of your life. Work ought to be part, *not your entire* life. "Get a Life," as they say. When work, whatever the work, is viewed as 'spiritual activity' the rewards are limitless. Finding work that is right for you demands that, "You must take ownership of how you feel, how you think, and what you want. You must assess your talents and limitations," according to Cloud and Townsend. This is a struggle for many and can take many years. Others seem to slip naturally into the job that fits.

One summer, at a crucial point in my life I had done everything in my own power to change career tracks. I had sent out fifty resumes, had a filing system for keeping track of them all, made phone calls, all over a three-month period. Nothing happened. No interviews or callbacks. I returned to the old job extremely disappointed. Each night when the children were asleep, just before I crawled into bed completely exhausted, I knelt and prayed, "Lord, this must be where you want me. Please get me through another day." After about six weeks my life took a major turn. I was recruited to go into a completely different area of work within the system where I was employed. It was a position I didn't even know existed, teaching students who were blind or visually impaired. I went to the beach and spent the night in a cottage owned by a friend and I

seriously reviewed what this would require—a return to college, a lot of extra study, a challenge. I accepted the position and dove in.

It was not just challenging, it was grueling. Your work is a blessing only as long as you treat it as a partnership between you and your maker. I urge you to review your work life.

- Is it a fit for you?
- Are you co-laboring with your Spirit within?
- Is there a balance between your job and your family life?
- Do you have healthy boundaries on the job?

Though I had some truly rewarding experiences during that time, I had not learned to be a co-laborer. I carried it on my shoulders like burdens until after several years I became ill. If you tend to be a fixer and take on jobs that are overwhelming, step back, take a breath, and reevaluate. Too much of your life is spent at work for you to resign yourself to ongoing misery, frustration, or illness.

Don't over commit.

Do you have enough confidence to protect yourself at work? Not from sexual harassment, racial or age discrimination, but from your own vulnerable boundary lines. Do you have the courage to set boundaries where you spend probably more than forty hours a week? Maybe you don't want to rock the boat. Maybe you have limited job skills and need to hold on to this job. Or perhaps you do not fully realize your own value.

When I was a young woman my dad told me when you go to interview for a job you must convey, "If you don't hire me you are making a mistake." I learned that I had value as an employee. And yet I was terrible at establishing personal boundaries on the job. My eagerness to please, to overcome all challenges, and to leap obstacles with a single—year of staying overtime more than necessary—was a recipe for burnout. I once

had a job I called Jaws. As I told anyone who would listen, "It will open up and swallow me if I let it." I've never known an employer to tell an employee, "You are doing too much. Slow down. Take it easy."

There are two sides of a balance and you must carry your responsibility for balancing your end. As an employee you are entering into an agreement to exchange your time and skill for a paycheck. The best time to set job boundaries is when you take the job, before you ever show up for work. Ask questions about your responsibilities. Insist on a clearly written job description. Know, going in, what is expected of you. You should be honest and realistic with yourself about how much time and energy you have for the time you will be on the job. Fulfill your responsibilities, but do not over extend yourself.

Do you protect your heart?

A difficult issue many women have is not guarding their hearts, allowing them to be walked all over and taken for granted. Some women would rather settle for having a man of any sort than not have a man at all.

Maybe this happened to you. Perhaps this is because your boundaries were abused when you were young, too young to do anything about it. I so wish our culture would change its approach and teach our young girls that they are beyond valuable. That they are priceless. That their bodies belong to them. That no one has a right to touch them without their permission. That no young or old man should ever take advantage of them. That they can protect their hearts.

If you find that you have not protected your heart, begin today. Respect yourself. Finally, Bottke says,

The key to effectively setting boundaries is to do so rationally and not emotionally, with firmness and love, from an authentic place of truth and maturity. (Bottke, 2013, p. 63)

No one else will do it for you.

Do you ever wonder why some women seem to have their act together and others just can't quite get there? Do you wonder how some moms manage to maintain a sense of self-assurance that you would like to have but don't know where to begin? Establishing boundaries starting from within will change your life. It will not be easy at first because women have not been encouraged to set boundaries. You can, however, do this. It is personal and internal work. The change will come over time. Then you will be the person you were designed to be. And Wow, what a woman that is!

Setting Boundaries is worth the effort.

Here are a few points to consider on your way:

- Your expectations of yourself and others ought to be reasonable, realistic, and rational.
- Know your own emotional triggers, what sets you off?
- Examine past hurts that may have contributed to who you have become.
- Learn your [personality type](#) or [Enneagram](#) number.
- Determine what motivates you.

Addendum

Technology Boundaries

Phone– Do you know that you don't have to answer every call?

Texting– Slow down. Give it some thought. Never, ever, ever do it while driving!!!

Facebook – Set your boundaries with a partner because it helps to have support.

Do not share anything personal, private or controversial. Avoid opinions.

Notes and recommended reading

Allison Bottke, *Setting Boundaries for Women* (Harvest House Publishers 2013)

Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries* (Zondervan 1992)

Jay Carter, *Nasty People* (Contemporary Books 1989)

M. Scott Peck, M.D., *People of the Lie* (Simon & Schuster 1983)



*I hold a degree from Lamar University in Speech and a Master's from the University of Texas. I was an educator in regular and special education for twenty years, finishing my professional career as a Braille teacher. I am a Certified Professional Coach with Fowler International Academy. I married Sam after raising three children as a single mother. In 2007 I founded [SMORE for Women](#). SMORE is a nonprofit association whose goal is Single Moms, Overjoyed, Rejuvenated, & Empowered. My stories have been published in several Christian books and magazines. My book, *Living Learning Loving*, published in July 2015, is available for purchase on [CreateSpace](#), [Amazon](#), or [Barnes & Noble online](#).*

Gail Cawley Showalter

www.gailshowalter.com

gail@gailshowalter.com

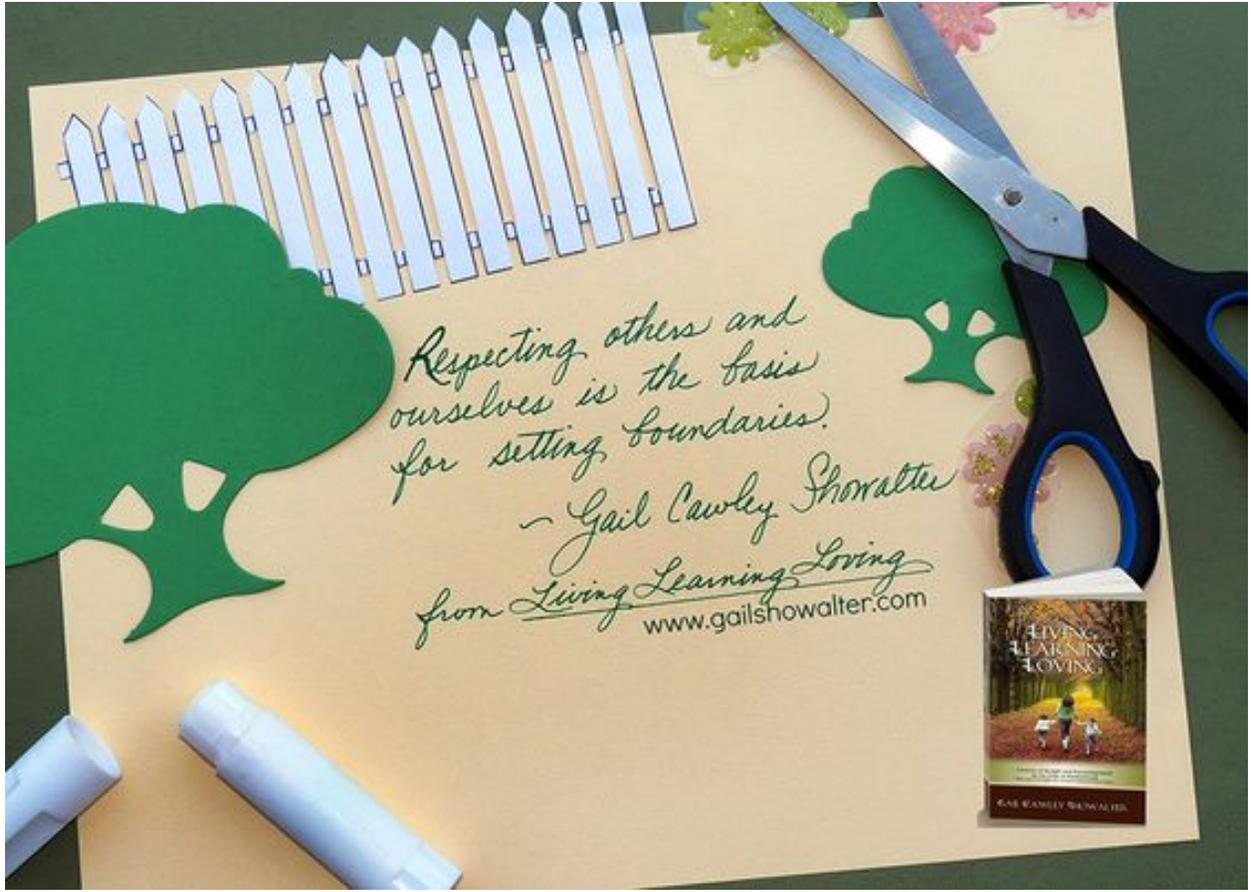


Photo graphic by Laurie Harris