

“The Virus and the Lion”

Autumn is the time of year you could easily come down with a cold. Some people get a cold, however not everybody. Isn't that interesting? If you have a good immune system, you might be the one who won't be affected by the different cold viruses. But if you already have fever, then it might be time to think about a way to overcome this cold. There are thousands of strategies! How is this related to our boundaries?

I would like to share a beautiful definition of boundaries with you that I learnt years ago in my training as a coach: **“Boundaries are imaginary lines we establish around ourselves to protect our souls, hearts and minds from the unhealthy or damaging behaviour of others.”**

Similar to a virus, it often happens that we are all of a sudden attacked by other people's behaviour. Then it's up to us to protect ourselves, in order to live a great life. How do we do that? When we talk about health, we would say we need very good nutrition, lots of vitamins, enough water and of course exercise, sport and time spent in nature. What could be a good mental immune system, regarding boundaries? What do you think? What do we have to look like, so that nobody would even want to attack us? How do we have to behave, so that nobody even dares to do something toxic to us?

Imagine a sleeping lion! Nobody would try to awake a sleeping lion. A lion knows he is the king of the animals. He is proud of himself, strong, incredibly powerful, calm and yet very quick. The stronger we are, the less likely anybody else will cross the imaginary lines we put up. The key to becoming and to behaving like a lion is self-care. Being incredible selfish. Day by day. Spoil yourself!

Do whatever helps make you stronger, prouder and more attractive. Be really selfish! Think of the lion! Then your inner boundaries will grow!

- You need additional external strategies as well, in order to make sure that you don't allow people to harm you. Train yourself to say NO. Not only once, but many times.
- Start with small things, like saying NO to an invitation. In the beginning this is difficult. We want other people's appreciation, love, loyalty or recognition. If we say NO, in the beginning it might look as if we are losing out. Other people will step forward and take our place. But in the long term we expand our own boundaries and gain respect from others.
- Saying NO is like training a new muscle you haven't had until today. The muscle might begin to hurt, but you need to continue. If you always keep your voice gentle and neutral, then it will become easier.
- Distance yourself from unpleasant people, from unhealthy environments and from people who do not like you. Accept that not everybody will like or love you. They may even dislike you. That's okay; it's about them and not about you.
- Don't help people unless they have specifically asked you to. A great technique to minimize your hidden costs to yourself.
- Spend your time with people who see the best in you, and not with those who disregard you or make you smaller than you are. All this will help you extend your boundaries three or four times beyond where they are now.

Good luck!