

The Benefit of a Fence

For many years I lived in South America, in Bolivia. We lived in a very remote area in the mountains far away from civilization. In our big garden we grew our own vegetables and herbs. We also had many animals, like rabbits and ducks and geese and cats and sheep and donkeys. We were almost completely self sufficient.

Does a fence make sense?

In the beginning, like the natives, we didn't have any fence around our garden. Perhaps you can image what happened without a fence. Our wonderful green salad and vegetables attracted everyone to visit us. The animals were also attracted to our luscious garden. Our neighbours as well as wild animals came during the night and helped themselves to our garden. After awhile our garden looked very bare.

So we decided to build a fence around us although we knew it was not the custom there. We wanted to protect our garden. There were no supermarkets there, no shops and no other way to get something to eat other than growing it ourselves. Our children were very little at that time. It may have looked like an egotistic attitude but it saved us from malnutrition.

Why am I telling you this little story? This is just one example of how setting boundaries is so important in our lives. Life is like setting different posts for a fence. There is something very precious in each of us. However, we can not allow other people to cross our own fence and take what belongs to us without our permission. We can not allow other people to do what they want to and hurt us or what is valuable to you.

Setting up boundaries

Not every fence looks the same. You can have big fences or small fences. Just like in a garden, sometimes you only want to protect a certain area in the garden such as stopping the starlings from eating your sunflowers. It is the same as stopping the sheep or other farm animals from eating your salad. Or stopping the mice in the house from eating your cheese and other food. What you choose to give away will depend who comes to you, how many will come and ask and how much you have. For every occasion, for every visitor you may choose something different.

In our busy lives it is absolutely the same. In order to live a wonderful and fulfilling life we have to build boundaries around us. You can also call them imaginary lines of protection. These boundaries will support us in getting what we want and creating a future that we choose.

How can we do that?

- You have to make a decision to stand up for yourself and commit to using boundaries in order to live Your life!
- Do one step at a time and stay on track!
- Be very clear on what you want and remain understanding of other persons. This is a skill and you can master it!
- Educate others in how they can respect your new boundaries!
- Have a lot of courage during this time!
- Make a list of ten things that people may no longer do around you or say to you. You are the only one who can decide what is acceptable in other people's behaviour and what is not.

How do we set boundaries?

Have a four step plan when somebody crosses your lines. Here is something that you can use:

- Inform them what they are doing
- Request they stop immediately
- Tell them the consequence if they do not stop
- Walk away without any comments

A Four Step Plan

It may be fun to do this with a partner/friend. This can be difficult for some people but once you learn it I promise you your life will change. If you are having difficulty and you would like support through the "Boundaries" skill please contact me for support.

A few other things you can add to support setting Boundaries:

- Give the people around you a chance to grow with you and learn from you during that time.
- Reward yourself for what you are doing
- Look for a friend or another person who encourages you and wants your best

What supports me in building up boundaries?

By the way, saying NO, is a powerful way to start with. "NO" is a complete sentence and does not have to be justified. Every time we say "NO" to someone we say "YES" to ourselves. And again - please come to me if you need support.

Have a great time!

Warmly

Heidi Röthlisberger

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