Eponaquest CLIENT HANDOUT

Three Types of Boundaries

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In professional and personal interactions, much needless strife, agitation, anger, apathy, and inefficiency occur due to a lack of training in how to set and respect boundaries.

But what are boundaries, and why do we need to set them? At the most basic physical level, a boundary helps you claim the personal space you need to feel safe, connected, and therefore engaged with a person who's approaching and interacting with you. Most of us have dealt with people who stand too close. It's hard to think straight, let alone pay attention to what they're talking about, when you're leaning backward, holding your breath, glancing toward the door, or perhaps dissociating (going blank and numb) to appear polite.

On the other hand, giving others the physical or emotional space *they* need not only helps them feel respected, it actually allows their *minds* to work more effectively. Quite simply, they hear and remember much more of what you're saying. Because people have differing needs for space, you need to pay attention to nonverbal cues of discomfort---*if* you want to be heard. Many people will only process and remember half of what you're saying if you move into their zone of personal space, as this literally makes their blood pressure rise and their minds to lose focus.

1. Horse/ Human Physical Safety Boundary Rule

For your safety and comfort and for the horse you are interacting with, this is the first boundary you must learn how to set in equine experiential learning.

Eponaquest guidelines for setting boundaries with a horse are:

When the horse is approaching the human, the human must set the boundary.

Pay attention to your arousal level as the horse is approaching -- with 1 being completely relaxed and 10 being near panic, choose a level in-between that feels comfortable and safe for you at this time with this horse.

Use a boundary device, which has no pulse or energy field. Do not use your arm/hand. The horse will have already entered your personal space by making physical contact. Pay attention to the rising arousal level in your body as the horse is approaching. Indicate where and when you want the horse to stop by waving the boundary device back and forth at the level of the feet.

When the human is approaching the horse, the horse sets the boundary.

Pay attention to the body language of the horse.

Stop when you see a reaction such as swishing tail, ears pinned back, and/or head turning. When you notice and respect these early warning signs, you are not likely to be bitten, kicked, or pushed around by the horse and the horse will be much more willing to interact with you.

2. Energetic Boundaries, often called Layers of the Energy Field

The Institute of Heart Math has proven beyond a doubt that our bodies generate an electromagnetic field that surrounds us. This is true of every living being. These layers are like concentric circles around the body and have edges that some call boundaries or hot spots.

Exploring the energy fields refers to noticing the ***involuntary reaction*** that the body has to the physical stimulation of a hot spot. Each being has an individual spatial proximity response; ***the space the body needs for the mind to be present.***

Energetic boundaries can be explored using the following process:

- *Approach the other watching for an involuntary physical reaction.*
- *Pause and then rock back and exhale. (sigh)*
- *Wait for the tension to relax.*
- *Again approach the other watching for the involuntary reaction and repeat the process.*
- *Continue to approach until you reach a comfortable hanging out place, where both can be relaxed and engaged.*

3. Boundaries to Protect Your Reality

These are boundaries that communicate to others what feels Emotionally, Spiritually, and Intellectually comfortable for you.

It is important to be specific in setting a boundary to avoid confusion and to avoid feelings of powerlessness and/ or power struggles, so set it in a way that is enforceable.

Remember that the purpose of setting boundaries is to take care of yourself; not to create walls or manipulate others. Give the other person *immediate positive feedback* when he or she makes the slightest move to give you the space, time or consideration you've asked for, in the form of relaxed, connected body language, smiles, gentle eye contact, etc. You want to show the person that you're not setting a boundary to alienate or punish anyone but to be able to be more present and connected with them. However it is also important that you have stated a consequence that you are willing to do if the boundary is not respected. Example: Please do not call me on the phone after 9 PM. Consequence: I will not answer my phone after 9 PM unless it is a true emergency.