



Healthy Boundaries

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Revised by Pam Stevenson and Denise Frick

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Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Reading

When we fail to set boundaries and hold people accountable, we feel used and mistreated. This is why we sometimes attack who they are, which is far more hurtful to them and to us than addressing their behavior or our choices about what we allowed.

~Brené Brown, American scholar, author, and public speaker, *The Gifts of Imperfection*

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What kind of personal boundaries did you (and others) have in your family of origin? How does that early learning impact the way you consider boundaries now?
2. What kind of boundaries do you think are absolutely necessary for you, and what boundaries might be better softened?
3. "Sometimes you have to draw a line in the sand, and sometimes you need to step across one." What experiences have you had with either one of these?
4. How do you open yourself to others, especially strange or uncomfortable others? How can you hold on to your sense of self and continuity with the past and still welcome diversity and change?
5. How do your boundaries match or line up with the boundaries set in your Covenant Circle's covenant?

Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings – see below

Sitting in Silence

Sharing – Please share your thinking about one or more of the session questions. During this time everyone has the opportunity to speak without interruption while others listen deeply. "Everyone gets to speak once before anyone speaks twice." Deep listening means we are being entirely attentive. We don't interrupt or give advice. There is no need to fix or save or set someone straight. We are simply making and holding a safe place where we are allowed to show up.

Open Discussion -This is a time for active conversations when we may respond to something another person said about the topic or relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading

Honoring your own boundaries is the clearest message to others to honor them, too.

~Gina Greenlee

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Readings

And this is one of the major questions of our lives; how we keep boundaries, what permission we have to cross boundaries, and how we do so.

~A. B. Yehoshua, Israeli novelist, essayist, and playwright

The great task is to claim yourself for yourself, so that you can contain your needs within the boundaries of your self and hold them in the presence of those you love. True mutuality in love requires people who possess themselves and who can give to each other while holding on to their own identities. So, in order both to give more effectively and to be more self-contained with your needs, you must learn to set boundaries to your love.

~ Henri Nouwen, Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian

A broken soul doesn't know how to invest in boundaries because the world has crossed them, over and over, without mercy. ~Shannon L. Alder, Author

The longer we stay in a violating situation, the more traumatized we become. When we fail to act on our own behalf, we lose spirit, resourcefulness, energy, health, perspective, and resilience. We must take ourselves out of violating situations for the sake of our own wholeness.

~Anne Katherine, Psychotherapist, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and Author, *Where to Draw the Line: How to Set Healthy Boundaries Every Day*

Boundaries are a kind of litmus test for the quality of our relationships. People in our lives who can respect our boundaries will love our wills, our opinions, and our separateness. Those who can't respect our boundaries are telling us that they don't love our nos. They only love our yeses, our compliance. "I love you when you do what I want." ~Henry Cloud, American Christian self help author, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*

People who violate your boundaries are thieves. They steal time that doesn't belong to them.

~Elizabeth Grace Saunders, Time coach, Author and Speaker

We were born to be free, to expand our horizons by going where we have never gone before, and not to hang out in the relative comfort and safety of the nest, the known. There is a place within us that is courageous beyond our human understanding; it yearns to explore beyond the boundaries of our daily life.

~Dennis Merritt Jones, Author and Speaker

Taking care of yourself, setting clear boundaries, means the people in your life will receive the best of you, not what's left of you. ~Anonymous

Healthy boundaries are both firm and flexible- they bend with the blowing wind and stand sturdy through the storms of life.

~Martha Baldwin Beveridge, Psychotherapist and Author

Reference:

Soul to Soul: Fourteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing, by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins, 2012, Skinner House Books