

# *Boundaries and Consent*

## **Bootcamp**

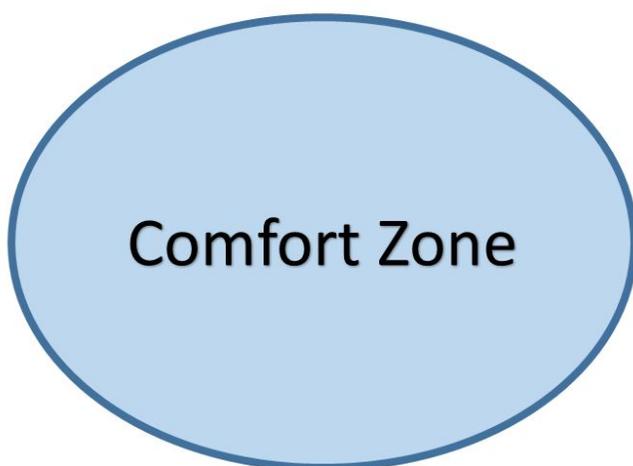
### **Module 1: Boundaries Basics**



**a 3 month online course** | *with your host Anya Manes*

Hello and welcome to Module One of the Boundaries and Consent Bootcamp! Thank you all for joining me for this. It's very exciting to get to present this to you. So, I'm using a different system here because I wanted to be able to display some images to you. I think they'll be helpful in helping you understand what I'm talking about. Alright, let's dive into boundaries!

I think you've probably heard a lot of people talk about your **Comfort Zone** and the way that I visualize that is like this eggshell. I've got my comfortable safe space there in the middle and then there's this line around it. This circle defines what's comfortable to me and what's not - and so that means by definition everything outside my comfort zone is uncomfortable. And so I

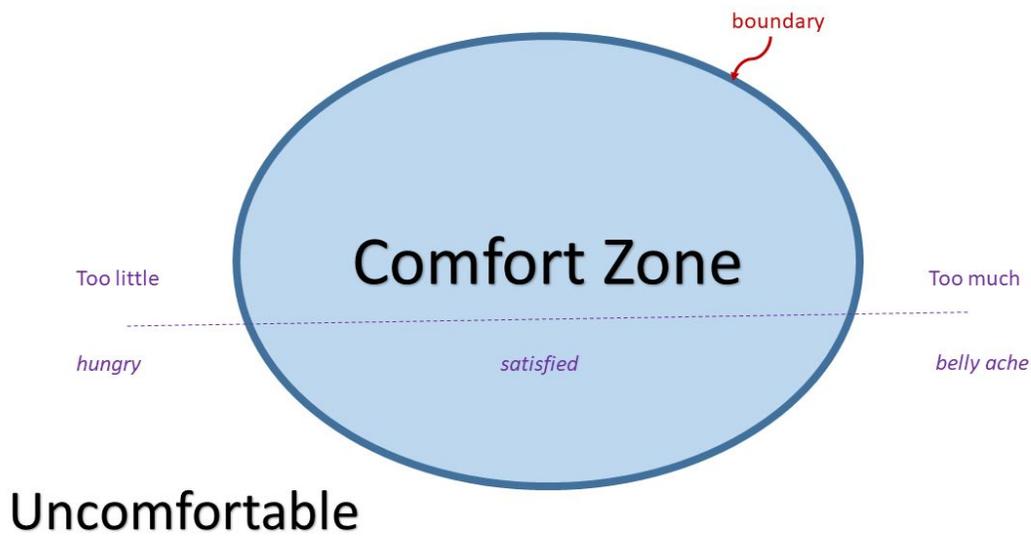


might write those words out, I also might use smiley faces. If I'm doing this with a smaller child (who may not be able to read those big words) then smiley faces will work just fine. Now the line in between that border of our circle, the circle itself, is what I'm calling our **Boundary**. So that's a very

conservative definition because we get uncomfortable all the time, but I think it's going to serve us. The reason that I call it your boundary is that in a sexual situation I wouldn't want anybody thinking that their boundary had *not* been crossed when they *were* feeling uncomfortable. The moment they become uncomfortable in a sexual situation, I want them to speak up and consider whether they want to defend their boundary here or whether they want that challenge, whether they want to challenge themselves, and get over their discomfort. So because I'm coming at this from a sexuality standpoint I have this very conservative idea of what your boundary is and

we're gonna play with that and see how that works out. You'll give me some feedback, I'm sure, about whether you like this kind of a definition of boundary or whether you understood it differently, but for the moment let's go with this.

Okay, if we are talking about boundaries in this way, then we're going to have to teach the term. Our kids may not know this word "boundary." They might not know it at all, or they might not know it in this context. So we might have to say that it's kind of like in sports, you know? When you are playing kickball or soccer or baseball, right, any of those have boundary lines for the ball. When the ball gets kicked or thrown outside of those boundary lines then the referee blows their whistle or drops a flag. We pause, we think about what to do, right? We think about the situation, how it came about. How can we rectify this situation so that the game can continue? It's similar to that. Okay, so when a boundary gets crossed, that's a good time to call a timeout, pause, decide what we're going to do next.



Now with our boundaries...there's often *too little* driving us out of our comfort zone, or we're in our comfort zone and we feel good, or *too much* on the other side of it, right? In biology, we call this "homeostasis." I need to stay in the middle. And we experience this all the time,

right? If I'm talking about food: too little food makes you hungry, just the right amount of food you feel good and satisfied, too much food you're gonna get a tummy ache, right? So we have uncomfortable on two ends, a *too much* and a *too little* end. And it goes even beyond that, because at some point we get to this other line around our whole diagram where eventually if you're too uncomfortable you **Can't Take It Anymore.**



So that's what I'd call this second line, this second

edge, and it's really important to distinguish between the two of these because I find that *one of the most common mistakes is people mistaking their boundary for that second edge.* Right? And instead of doing something about it when they first became uncomfortable, they delay and delay and they wait and they wait and they get all the way to "I can't take it anymore" and that's when they lash out, right? Freak out. They respond by *reacting*, and that's not an empowered place. "I can't take it anymore" is where you're losing it, right, and so we'll do much better if we can distinguish between these two, and really start responding when our boundaries are crossed and not when we get to that second edge.

[5:00] Outside that second edge is something I call **Panic**. If you are panicked, then you're not able to think anymore, right? This is where we're freaking out. Now, this can happen when we have food: it could be that I have so little food that my body is getting panicky - I'm hypoglycemic. Or it could be that I've had so much food that I'm ready to puke. And so this is just the way our bodies are set up. It's not only true of the physical things - it's also true of the

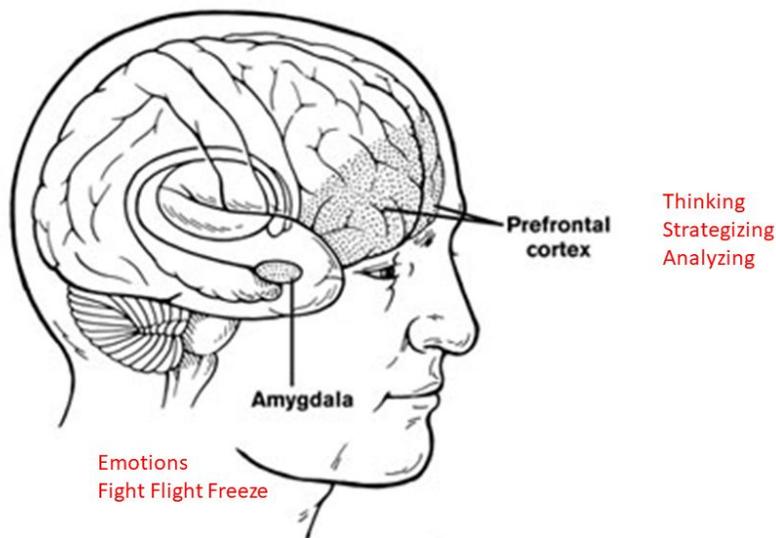
emotional. So for example, if I'm engaged then I'm comfortable but if I'm getting too little stimulation then I'm bored. If I'm getting too much stimulation I'm over-stimulated...but those can get worse, right? If I'm so bored that I can't take it anymore, then I'm acting out. If I'm so overstimulated that I can't take it anymore, then I'm overwhelmed. This is happening to our kids in school, right? How many of us have a kid in school who is so bored that they're acting out? Or a kid in school who is so overstimulated that they're overwhelmed? Right? And we can distinguish between these and say, "Hey we need to act sooner." We can't just get to that *I can't take it anymore* panicky place. That's not helpful.



So there were two examples, but there are lots of words that we use to describe comfortable, being uncomfortable, or even being in that panic state. Inside the Comfort Zone, that's when we're being our best selves. When we're feeling centered and balanced. We feel good. We feel great! Right? I feel okay. If I'm feeling Uncomfortable, though, that's when I might be in pain. I might be cold. I might be hot. I might be hungry or thirsty. I might be tired or restless. Those are all uncomfortable but those are more physical. We could have the

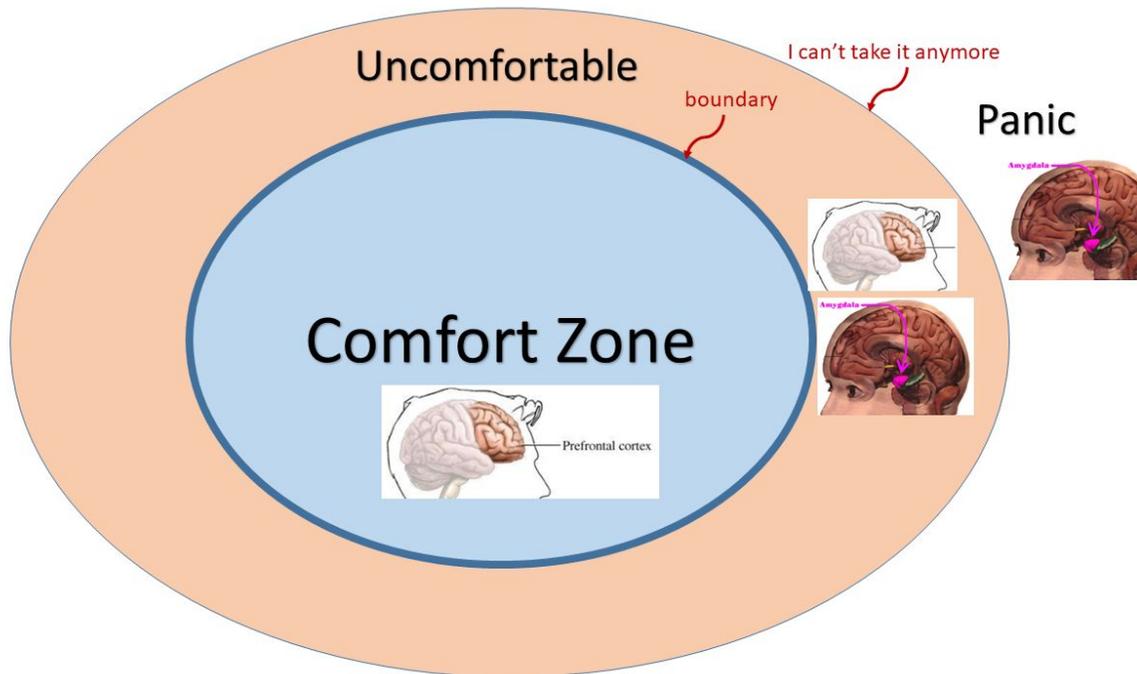
emotional. I could be worried or anxious. I could be mad, frustrated, embarrassed, sad, offended. All these emotional terms: ashamed or scared or stressed. And with the Panic zone, we have a bunch of words for that too. If I talk about how I freaked out, or I snapped, or I lost it, that's all getting at how I couldn't take it anymore and I panicked. Maybe I became hysterical, maybe I'm just exhausted, and so I can't take it anymore. Or with our kids, we often describe it as a meltdown or a temper tantrum, but it's the same thing. We're all wired this way.

Diving into the brain just a little bit... I'm going to talk about just two parts. The **prefrontal**



**cortex** is right here under your forehead, behind your eyes, and the amygdala is sort of deep in the middle. The **amygdala** is part of this ancient brain that evolved very very long time ago and is sometimes called the reptile brain. So the

reptile brain has the basics for living on land, for surviving. It controls your body functions, keeps your heart beating, your lungs breathing, and it's also the seat of your basic emotions like fight/flight/freeze. The prefrontal cortex is totally different. That's part of the mammalian brain. It evolved much later and this is where we have our thinking and our strategizing and our analyzing. They're totally separate parts. When you're in fight/flight/freeze - that's the amygdala. When you're thinking and strategizing and analyzing, that's the prefrontal cortex.



Now, these two fight for control. These two are both trying to be in charge at different times. If I'm comfortable, then I'm able to think and analyze and strategize: the prefrontal cortex is in control. If I'm in a panic, right, if my life is in danger, then that reptile brain, that amygdala, takes over and pitches you into fight or flight or freeze. And so in Panic, you're really not able to think and strategize anymore. At that point, the amygdala makes a choice whether it's going to fight back, or freeze and stay still, or run away. And you didn't get to make that choice, because there was no thinking and analyzing going on. Basically, it takes a lot longer to think and analyze than to react, and the amygdala is the one that just reacts. It doesn't wait to see if that stick on the ground is really a stick. It thinks, "Oh my god that's a snake!" and it panics, right? And you make that scream that you didn't know that you could do? And you jump backward, right?

[10:00] So maybe you run away . . . that's the amygdala taking over.

Now in this uncomfortable zone, we haven't quite had the amygdala hijack the brain. Sometimes it happens immediately, right? So if something really bad happens, you might get thrown out of your comfort zone straight into panic. Often the discomfort mounts and so there is

a window of uncomfortable, and when we've got that happening then the prefrontal cortex is still trying to solve the problem, think about whatever's going on, and the amygdala is trying to say, "Hey! Hey, I don't like this. Do I need to take over? This is no good." Right? It's sending you those feelings of being worried, or anxious, or angry and you're still trying to think your way through it. That uncomfortable zone is where your boundary has been crossed but you're still able to take it. You're still able to think, even though you feel bad, even though you don't like it. You're still able to think because you have access to your prefrontal cortex. Whereas if we wait too long, you lose access. Right? The blood flow literally cuts off and it all goes to the amygdala. The amygdala takes over and we're in panic. Okay, so we're all wired this way. This is how we evolved. That amygdala is supposed to be saving our skin from the lion. Right?

Now sometimes we get **triggered** and that is something a little different. That's where you go from your comfort zone straight out to panic because something reminded you of the past. And so it's when your amygdala takes over because it sees something yellow go by and you have a memory inside you of when you almost got killed by a lion - and it doesn't matter that this time it was a taxicab. That memory was strong enough that that yellow thing going by, that taxicab, actually triggers panic. Right? You go straight to fight/flight/freeze with the amygdala. So when we have trauma, something unresolved, we might entirely skip that uncomfortable zone, and again that's not our fault, that's the way our brains are built. And so that needs to be taken apart and teased apart and treated so that we do have that slow mount towards panic. We do have a possibility of dealing with the problem, rather than being flipped right into panic and getting reactive around it.

## Feel it: Hold your breath



0

Okay, so I'm going to challenge you to feel all the parts of this diagram because it's kind of abstract until you feel it, and we can do that really safely with you completely in control by just having you hold your breath. So at first, you're just going to hold your breath and you're going to be comfortable, and then as the tension mounts, you'll feel your boundary. You'll switch over into that uncomfortable zone and when that happens, just maybe note that. Note what your number is. In workshops I have people raise their hands. So okay there was my boundary. It's not going to be loud, right, it's not going to be in your face the way that panic is. Instead, it's going to be kind of a whisper. It's going to be "Oh, if I could breathe right now, I really would." I'm not talking about the tension of your muscles holding your breath (because of course, that tension is a little uncomfortable). I really mean your need for oxygen, that's what we're noticing. Now we could solve the problem by starting to breathe again, but we're not going to, so that we can feel all the parts of the diagram. We're going to let that tension mount. You're going to keep holding your breath, and eventually we'll get to that panic place where if you couldn't take a

breath right then, you really would be very upset. Right? You'd be fighting to swim to the surface of the water or you'd be fighting your assailant or loved one or whomever off your body so that you could breathe again.

So we're going to feel all of that, and of course when you can't take it anymore, feel free to breathe. Most of us laugh and shake off that tension. Again, notice your number. See where you were. I'm gonna do this with you, but as you can see I've still got my cold so I'm still coughing and so my numbers might not be very impressive. All right, go ahead and take a deep breath and hold it...

[15:00] Thirty-eight for me. I'm gonna let this run because you might be an opera singer! We'll go to a minute. I have been in workshops where someone just keeps going and going and going and we're like, "Dang you're an oyster diver. What's your deal?" So if you're still holding your breath, congratulations. Wonderful! If your number came up already, fantastic! Just like mine did.



All right, I bet that you had numbers something like this, right? Or maybe they were different, but let's use this as an example. Let's say that I felt it at 15 seconds. (I'd have to go back and see because I had my eyes

closed so I could really feel it.) I made it all the way to 38, this time, but in this slide, I wrote 30. So here's the window. Right before 15 seconds, I don't even notice anything wrong. I don't have a sense that there's a problem to be solved because I'm not uncomfortable yet. After 30, I don't

have the brain capacity to really solve any problems. So between 15 and 30 is really my problem-solving window, right? That's it. That's all I've got. Now somebody else might have had a window like 20 and 40. Right, and so different people will have different boundaries. When I do this with groups, hands go up at all different times and so it's really dramatic how the golden rule fails. You know? Just because it's comfortable for me doesn't mean it's comfortable for you. I couldn't have predicted where your boundary was going to be, not at all. It's impossible to predict.

Now some people put their hand up at like 35 and they let out their breath at 40. That happens to some of us where we don't even register our boundaries until we're really close to panicking. Now you might



think that that means that you're really patient. Right? I had a client who said that, "I thought I was so patient," because she's comfortable with this much discomfort but it means that, unfortunately, we don't have much bandwidth when it comes to the first time we speak up and when we lose it. So we really want to work on noticing our boundaries sooner. If that was you, that'll be one of the challenges, to notice your boundaries sooner so that you can give people a little bit more warning: "Hey, I'm getting uncomfortable with this. I don't like this. Can we shift?" Okay, so it's impossible to predict each other's boundaries. We don't want to assume what our

partner's boundaries are or what our kids' boundaries are because everybody has a different level of sensitivity. Everybody has a different body.



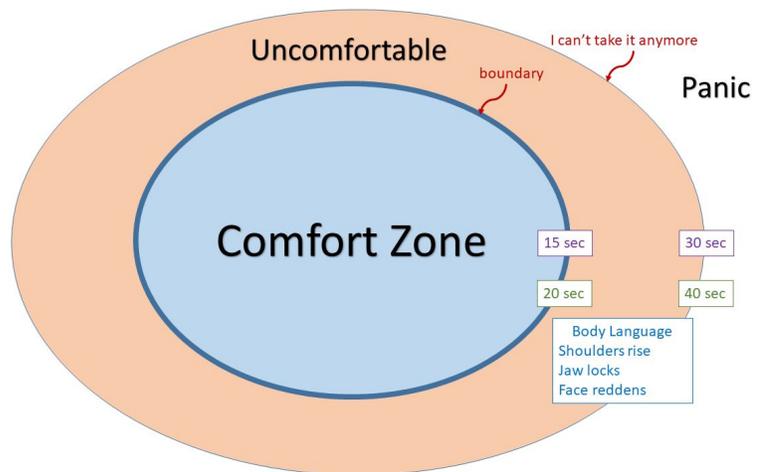
Now if I was to take you deep-sea diving and assume that you could hold your breath just as long as I could, I might say, "Hey let's hold our breath and swim to this awesome cave I know about." Right, now that assumption is going to get me into trouble, because if your numbers were different than mine, then we're going to get to that cave and I'm going to show you around and maybe you're already in a panic, right? You're like, "Oh my god! Where's the boat? How do we get out of this cave?" and I'm like, "Isn't this cool? This is fun, right?" like "Check out this awesome thing" and then we swim back up. And if you've been brewing in that panic for any time at all, then when we come up, you could be like, "What the hell's wrong with you?!" Right? You're gonna blame me for not taking care of you. And so when we really do this we have to check in. If you're really going diving then you have to use your hand signals to actually say "are you doing okay" because there's no way to communicate with your voice and, you know, that mask over your face. We can't really read body language very well, so this dangerous assumption that "somebody's boundaries are just like mine" is not going to work out well because that's really going to strain a friendship or a partnership.

So when you're doing this little exercise, another fun nuance with it - not just that maybe you're doing this with your family and you're noticing where each other's boundaries are for the first time around holding your breath - but another great thing to do is to notice **body language**. I bet that if I went back and looked at that video I'd see my face getting red, because my face

[20:00] does that. The other thing

I do is I tend to wiggle my toes when I'm uncomfortable. And so my husband has learned this because if he gives me a massage and it's too hard I'll start wiggling my toes if I haven't spoken up. Right? And he'll be

like, "Oh, I need to ease off." Right? Because he's picking up on my nonverbal cues - my body language. So it's great to start to notice this with your family members, with the people you're close to. Because if what they tend to do is lock their jaws or their shoulders get tense, right, or they do something with their hands, maybe they pick it their fingernails, right, we all have different ways of holding that tension, things that we do to kind of distract ourselves and deal with it. See if you can notice your partner's coping strategy for managing that tension. What is your own? What's your child's? You'll know what do they do when they're feeling uncomfortable - well now you can notice it any time. Right? If they're uncomfortable at dinner, if they're uncomfortable playing with another child, right? Whenever it might come up, you'll notice that thing that they do, and you'll be like, "Oh it's sort of like the pee pee dance. I can see that you're trying to hold it. I'm trying to hold it together here but you're actually quite uncomfortable" and so now I'm going to encourage you to do something about it. I'm going to encourage you to take a timeout, take care of yourself, to speak up about it. Right? I'm gonna ask you if you're okay and check in. So if we can start to identify what are each other's physical signals, then - again, not the Golden Rule, I'm not going to look for toe wiggling in somebody else because their body is different. They have a different way of holding their tension. But if I know that my husband tends



to do this or my child tends to do that, I can look for that and it's gonna make me more sensitive to their discomfort, and they can look for mine. Right? So when I'm uncomfortable they can check in with me because I might not even have noticed it yet. I might be so focused on what I'm trying to do, the task at hand, that they'll be like, "Hey, you know, your face is getting red. Are you breathing? Or your toes are wiggling, you know, are you actually okay with this?" and then "Oh, okay, let me zoom out and check in with myself" rather than stay so myopic and concentrated it on the thing I was trying to accomplish. So we can help each other, right? Notice what the signals are that your loved ones are uncomfortable because that's actually really helpful. So it might be worth it to do this breath exercise once, like, going through and really pointing out how boundaries are different for different people, how we need to be sensitive to one another because we can't predict. And it might also be helpful to go through and do it again and say, "Everybody look for everybody else's coping mechanism," and you can kind of exaggerate yours or you can just really clue into your kids'. See what everyone notices because of course, everyone's going to notice something different.

Now I often get asked this question: Well okay, but what if we're uncomfortable all the time? You know, I have to make my child uncomfortable to put them in their car seat and she doesn't want to go, or when I say it's time to stop playing and she starts crying. So there's a lot of times when we make each other uncomfortable and is that okay? Yes. That's okay. There are ways in which we push boundaries that are healthy and there are ways that are unhealthy. Right? Where we really need to check it and be like, "Wait is this okay? Do I need to defend my boundaries here?" So in general, right, of course, there will be exceptions, but in general, who can push your boundaries? It's really quite okay for you to push your own boundaries, for you to challenge yourself into doing something new. Right? In general, that's always going to be good. Not good for the anorexic to see if she can, or he can, challenge themselves to go without more

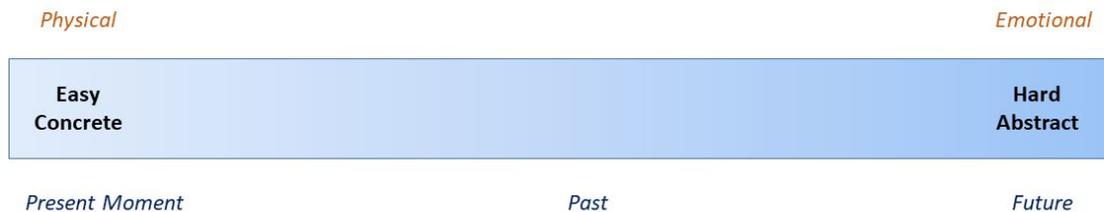
food. Right? So there are ways in which we might push our own boundaries that are bad and unhealthy. But in general, pushing your own boundaries is just fine. In general, parents and teachers and coaches are trying to guide children well, and so, in general, your parents are pushing your boundaries and it's healthy. Now peers though, friends, partners, boyfriends, girlfriends, they might not be pushing your boundaries in a healthy way. That's one where I'd pause and check in and say, "Is this really for me?" right, because that's the guideline. If it's something that they want FOR YOU [25:00] then, in general, it's healthy boundary-pushing cause now I can be like, "Well do I want that for myself?" Right? If I want to learn to speak on stage and give a TED talk, then maybe I'll hire a coach. Maybe I'm pushing myself to do that even though I'm nervous about it. I'm uncomfortable getting up there and put myself out like that. And my partner might be like, "Well let's start by having you do X, Y and Z." Right, and so if they're pushing me to do something that I really want to do and accomplish my goal, then that's healthy pushing of boundaries. But if it's something I don't want to do, if they're like, "You should do a TED talk" and I'm like, "I don't want to do a TED talk. I don't want to be a public speaker. I don't want anything to do with any of that. That's not my goal. I would like to write a book. Thank you very much." Right? if I'm going in a totally different direction then I can defend my boundary and be like, "No I am NOT going to do that" and so you pushing me to do it, no, that's not healthy.

So, in general, peers may have their own agenda. Your kids' friends may be wise about pushing boundaries, but they may not be. They might be kind of pressuring your child to try marijuana or to drink alcohol or to have sex. Right? So there are lots of ways that peers don't push boundaries in healthy ways and so for that reason, I'd say, in general, do a gut check around peers pushing boundaries. Also your kids. Your kids, in general, are not pushing your boundaries to help you grow and achieve your goals. They are pushing boundaries because

they want something FROM YOU, not for you. And so that's a place to do a gut check and say, "How do I feel about this? Am I comfortable with this?" and if I'm uncomfortable with it, then I need to say something. Right? I need to talk about my boundary. We need to have a discussion. I probably need to be real assertive that this is my boundary, that I'm not comfortable with it and not budge. So there's your guideline for who can and who can't push boundaries. I hope that's helpful.

Now last bit. In terms of awareness and skill building, the physical in the present moment is going to be the easiest. I can check in with myself right now and say: Am I thirsty? Am I tired of talking? Am I a little bit uncomfortable in some way? Am I holding tension in my body? So that's going to be the easiest for kids to do. It's going to be the easiest for most of us to do, physical in the present moment. Now remembering in the past about physical is fairly easy to do. Was I cold? Was I hot? Predicting into the future that's a different thing: Will I be cold? Will I be hot? Will I be uncomfortable in that situation? We want our kids to gain that skill of being able to predict so that they can prepare, so that they bring what they'll need. If we take it to emotional...Emotional is a little trickier than physical. We maybe don't, feel those signals that strongly or as clearly.

# Boundaries awareness & skill building



And so emotional in the present will be more easy, more concrete. How are you feeling emotionally right now? Are you feeling uncomfortable or are you feeling a little nervous? Or are you feeling exuberant and enthusiastic? So we can check in with the emotions right now. Of course, your child needs to be able to name them, so that's a skill. How did you feel in the past? Did you feel overwhelmed by that? Did you feel worried about that before it happened? Right? Were you feeling angry and then you hit? Right? What was going on before? So then again that's getting a little harder because it's emotion and in the past. Emotional and in the future is probably the trickiest one. And so, as you're skill-building, as you're talking about boundaries, and as you're thinking through, "Will you need a snack after school? How would you feel if your friend texted you this or sent you this photo?" Those are boundary awareness, but it's getting into the harder realm because it's in the future. So I hope that's helpful. In general, with the smallest child, I would start with the present and physical and then maybe do past and the physical and then maybe do future and physical and then move into emotional. "How will you feel if...", in the present moment, in the past, and then future so we can start to cover this whole terrain. But I do it from the easiest to the hardest, from the most concrete to the more abstract.

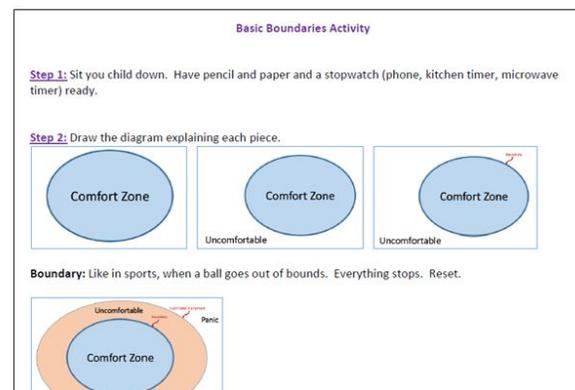
[30:00] All right so this is the end of Module 1. What I want to challenge you to do with all this new information is to start to metabolize it. Think about it. Make sure that you understand it. If not, go back and check out this video again. Find the part that felt a little off so that you can explain it when you're ready to try the breath activity with someone in your family. Maybe it's just with your partner, maybe you don't have a partner and so you're going straight to doing it with your kids. Maybe you do it with the whole family. One of my clients said that her boundaries are really confronted a lot by her mother and so she invited Grandma. And she and Grandma and her child all did the activity together. Super interesting, right, because now you're getting grandma in on this so that she understands this just the way that we're talking about it. So try this activity.

## Action Steps

Try the breath activity with your partner, kids, or whole family.

Tell us how it went in the Facebook group.

*Stretch: keep a log over the next few days. When did you notice your boundary? When did you defend it? When didn't you?*



I'm going to give you a handout. You can see a little screenshot of it right here. A basic boundaries activity is just walking you through the “holding your breath activity.” If you wanted to do this again you can, of course, do holding your breath as many times as you like. It's a quick way to do it in under one minute, usually. If you want to change it, there are lots of ways of

challenging your boundaries in a way that's safe so that you can feel all the pieces of this diagram. So, for example, you can get some ice out of the freezer and have everybody hold a piece or two of ice and see, probably pretty quickly, you feel uncomfortable. Like right when you pick it up, but then how long? What's your coping mechanism before you break and you have to drop that ice into the trash can, into the washcloth, into the napkin. So there are lots of ways of doing this. You can play with the lights. You can play with the volume on a stereo. However it is that we feel things, there's that continuum where we become uncomfortable and then if we're uncomfortable enough, we can't take it anymore. And so if you find that you want to do this exercise of feeling the diagram in all of its form and all of its parts, then let me know what exercises you've done and whether you're looking for new ones because, of course, I have lots of ideas. So try one of these exercises with your kids. I don't recommend showing them the piece of paper that I'm going to give you as a handout. Or if you want to, you can show them this video, but I really recommend that for ages 10 and up because it can be a little abstract for the younger ones - they don't have such long attention spans. So if you're doing this with your littlest ones, then really, like, pencil on napkin kind of drawing is the way to go. You can, of course, do real paper, but what I mean is that you're just sketching it out. You're just drawing circles and then labeling different parts. You're not being formal about this. The informal feel is going to help it be more giggly and less classroom-y. So just grab your pencil and paper and your timer and that way you'll be prepared for doing this.

And the stretch assignment for those of you who really want to dive in and do more over the next two weeks is to notice your boundaries. Notice over the next few days: When did you feel your boundary? When did you actually do something to defend it? Whether that was walking out of the room or speaking up. And when did you *not* defend it? When did you choose *not* to do so? And was there a balance there? Do you generally defend it? Do you generally not

defend it? So start to just notice what do you do around your own boundaries. I'm defining boundaries around guarding your comfort zone.

Alright, please let us know how it's going in the Facebook group. Share your story about doing this with your kids or with your partner or the whole family. Share your stories about noticing your boundaries as this week goes on and we'll see you on the Q&A Call or in Module 2.