



HOW HEALTHY
CHOICES
GROW HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIPS

BOUNDARIES IN DATING

DR. HENRY CLOUD & DR. JOHN TOWNSEND

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Boundaries in Dating

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The examples used in this book are compilations of stories from real situations. But names, facts, and issues have been altered to protect confidentiality while illustrating the points.

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Why Dating?

A few years back I was doing a seminar for singles in the Midwest when the question came from the floor, “Dr. Cloud, what is the biblical position on dating?” At first, I thought I had misheard the question, so I asked the woman to repeat it. And the question came out the same as the first time.

“What do you mean, ‘the biblical position’?” I asked.

“Well, do you think that dating is a biblical thing to do?” the woman explained.

Once I heard her question, I thought she was kidding, but I soon realized she was not. I had heard people ask about the biblical position on capital punishment or euthanasia, but never on dating.

“I do not think the Bible gives a ‘position’ on dating,” I said. “Dating is an activity that people do, and as with a lot of other things, the Bible does not talk about it. What the Bible *does* talk about is being a loving, honest, growing person in whatever you do. So, I would have to say that the biblical position on dating has much more to do with the person you are and are becoming than whether or not you date. The biblical position on dating would be to date in a holy way.

“In fact, God grows people up through dating relationships in the same way that he grows them up in many other life activities. The question is not whether or not you are dating. The questions are more along the lines of ‘Who are you in your dating and who are you becoming in your dating? What is the fruit of your dating for you and for the people that you date? How are you treating them? What are you learning?’ And a host of

other issues that the Bible is very clear about. It is mainly about your character growth and how you treat people.”

“So, you think it is okay to date?” she pressed.

“Of course, I do, but it is only okay to date within biblical guidelines, which by the way are not burdensome. They will save your life and help you to make sure you end up with a good person to marry,” I said, chuckling on the inside about how often Christians want a rule.

I thought this was the end of it until the same question kept coming up around the country whenever I would speak to singles. Over and over again, I was asked if dating were an okay thing to do or not. I was curious about why people were asking the same question.

So, one day, I asked where these questions were coming from. I was told that a movement was arising from a book called *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* by Joshua Harris. The premise of the book is that dating is not a good idea, and many people were giving it up. As I continued to investigate, the movement went even further than the book in some circles. Many Christians were saying that dating was sinful in and of itself; others were at least feeling as if people who were still dating were less spiritual than those who didn't. It was becoming the “Christian” thing to forego dating. I thought at first that this was just in some circles, but the more I traveled around I was hearing it all over the country.

So we read *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, and in this chapter we will share some of our reactions. We strongly disagree with the idea that all people should give up dating for several reasons. But before we get into the specifics, we want to validate the reasons behind this movement.

No one would take such a stance against dating without good reason, and the reason people are giving up dating seems to be this: pain, disillusionment, and detrimental effects to their spir-

itual life. In other words, dating has not helped them to grow, find a mate, or become a more spiritual person. So, it makes sense to kiss it good-bye.

And we empathize with this pain. As we have seen over the years working with many singles and being single for a long time ourselves (both of us were well into our thirties before we married), dating can cause a lot of hurt and suffering. Many people become disillusioned in the process, and they feel like they do not know how to make it work. They experience heartbreak, they repeatedly pick the “wrong type,” they can’t find the “right type,” or they find the “right type” and they don’t like him or her as much as the wrong type. They have trouble integrating their spiritual life into dating. And they question what to do with physical attraction and moral limits, as well as wonder when to move from casual dating to a more significant relationship.

For many people the pain and suffering of dating becomes too much, and they are ready for an alternative. And out of this motivation, we concur with the followers of the no-dating movement and its proponents. The pain of dating is not worth it if it does not lead to anything good. We understand Mr. Harris’s motive for writing this book.

But we disagree with his conclusion. While we agree that the hurt must stop, we don’t think that dating is the problem. We think people are. In the same way that cars don’t kill people, drunk drivers do, dating does not hurt people, but dating in out-of-control ways does. Paul’s advice to the Colossians is sound: “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an *appearance of wisdom*, with their self-imposed worship, their

false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, *but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence*” (Colossians 2:20–23, italics ours). Paul cautioned the Colossians that making rules and abstaining from certain practices would never develop the maturity they needed to live life.

Human problems are matters of the heart, the soul, one’s orientation toward God, and a whole host of other maturity issues. As Paul says, avoiding certain things you could engage in destructively does not cure your basic problem of immaturity, which is internal not external. You may be immature and not able to handle dating, so you abstain from dating. But, unless you do something to grow up, you will still be immature, and you will take that immaturity right into marriage.

Avoiding dating isn’t the way to cure the problems encountered in dating. The cure is the same as the Bible’s cure for all of life’s problems, and that is *spiritual growth leading to maturity*. Learning how to love, follow God, be honest and responsible, treat others as you would want to be treated, develop self-control, and build a fulfilling life will ensure better dating.

Before we tell you in this book how to date well, we want to point out some reasons why we think you shouldn’t kiss dating good-bye and some more reasons why we think dating can be great.

In his book in the chapter “The Seven Habits of Highly Defective Dating,” Joshua Harris talks about the following “negative tendencies” of dating.

1. Dating leads to intimacy but not necessarily to commitment.
2. Dating tends to skip the “friendship” stage of a relationship.
3. Dating often mistakes a physical relationship for love.
4. Dating often isolates a couple from other vital relationships.

5. Dating, in many cases, distracts young adults from their primary responsibility of preparing for the future.
6. Dating can cause discontentment with God's gift of singleness.
7. Dating creates an artificial environment for evaluating another person's character.

All of these problem scenarios are created by people and the way that they date. Throughout the rest of this book we will address each one of these by looking at the lack of appropriate structure within, among other things, a person's character, support system, values, and relationship with God. In other words, a lack of *boundaries*.

Each one of these scenarios has to do with some aspects of character immaturity, such as fusion, dependency, or self-centeredness. A loss of boundaries occurs when an immature person gives up all of his or her structure, internal and external, and fuses with an ideal, a person, or something else to avoid maturing. The immature, idealized "falling in love" that we have all seen as destructive is always a problem in which someone needs to be brought back to reality. If someone has this tendency, they need character and spiritual growth to mature enough to face life and relationships in a more balanced way. And we think that God can provide that.

Throughout the book, we talk about all of these problems, and the boundaries that will cure them. God gives us principles to guide us in life. Because we can trust his ways, we are free to grow and develop a life as we mature. We do not have to avoid life, or maturity.

Harris builds his case on one example after another of selfish gratification of passion at the expense of another person, or of heartbreak, or of immature, dependent, addictive romance. None of those situations are caused by dating, but by the immaturity

of the people involved. We all know many situations where more mature and godly teens, young adults, and older adults dated in very growth-producing and mature ways, and they are very grateful for the experience. Harris's logic seems to be:

Person A dated person B.
Person A or B or both got hurt.
Dating is bad.

This is a little like saying because there is divorce, no one should get married. Or because there are car accidents, no one should drive. Many singles date very responsibly, and they learn and grow through the experience. Both parties are the better for it, and they are more prepared for a later commitment.

Harris, however, is right about this: *some* people should not date, at least for a while. Just as some people should not drive, or should not ever drink, or should not do other things the Bible leaves as free territory, some people should not date. The biblical principle is that these people might have a weakness or immaturity that could cause them to stumble, and for this reason, refraining from a certain activity is best.

One internationally known youth worker I consulted confirmed this. He said, "Refraining from dating is probably a good idea for a small percent of the teenagers we work with. The rest need to be dating and learning how to handle all that dating brings up in the maturity cycle." This is what we think as well. Not dating is a good idea for a few people—people who are vulnerable to destructive romantic fusion, who are being used by others, or who are avoiding maturity. Not dating is a good idea to give these people an opportunity to grow.

But, for others, we think dating can be a very good experience. And so does Harris. He just doesn't call it "dating." He says that a couple should spend time with each other to see if they are right

for one another before they go forward into marriage. But, he distinguishes that from dating because from the first “date,” the couple is investigating marriage. Up until this point, there was friendship. Not a bad plan, we believe. Get to know someone well before you commit to marriage. We also believe that dating offers this opportunity—and more.

Here are a few of the benefits we see in dating:

1. *Dating gives people the opportunity to learn about themselves, others, and relationships in a safe context.*

When done properly, dating is an incubator time of discovering the opposite sex, one’s own sexual feelings, moral limits, one’s need for relationship skills, and one’s tastes in people. But dating must be done in the proper context. A single person must date within a community of people who care about him or her. For teens, this context is their parents, friends, youth group, youth pastor, coaches, and the like.

Dating gives people a place to grow and learn in the safety of people who can help them develop. I told one youth worker who believed in the no-dating movement that I thought he was robbing teens of needed input and coaching if he encouraged them to not date. I would rather see teens learn in a situation where they have guidance and have an opportunity to mature before making a marriage commitment than see them make a commitment and then have to figure all of that out later.

The same is true for older singles. Their friends, pastors, and community should provide support for their dating lives. This gives them a place to grow until they are ready for marriage.

2. *Dating provides a context to work through issues.*

Ask some happily married people how they would have fared if they had married their first boyfriend or girlfriend. We have all seen it a thousand times. People’s first choices of who they

are attracted to may not be so great. Dating offers people a place to find out that what they think they value in a person might not be what they value in the long term. They may find that what they are attracted to is fleeting and can even be destructive. Some of these attractions can even take on spiritual overtones. I have heard many times that someone was attracted to another person's spiritual "maturity" and character. They thought the person was great. But after they started to date, they got to know him or her a lot better, and closer. And they found out that what looked so good in a casual relationship did not hold water in a closer relationship over time.

I was talking to a woman who had grown up with an overpowering father and who had a strong dislike for this domination. She was attracted to men who were kind and soft, qualities her father did not possess. She ended up marrying her first boyfriend, after dating for only a short while. He was a very nice and kind man, but because she feared a man's power, a very passive one. She was sorry that she did not learn earlier about her tendency to idealize passivity. Had she dated her husband for a while, she would have known what she was getting into and what he was like in a real relationship. Lots of people look good until there is a real relationship day after day.

3. Dating helps build relationship skills.

Intimate relationships take a lot of work and a lot of skills. Many people do not come to the table of adulthood having learned these relationship skills in their families or other places. But, when they begin dating, they find out that they possess some serious insecurities, or they lack certain relationship skills, such as communication, vulnerability, trust, assertiveness, honesty, self-sacrifice, and listening. In their dating relationships they become aware of their immaturity and are able to find out what they need to work on before they are ready for a significant relationship. In addition, dating gives a person the

opportunity to learn about relationship itself and how they function in a relationship. It can be an enormous time of growth and discovery.

4. *Dating can heal and repair.*

I ran into a man I hadn't seen in some time and was surprised to find that he was happily married to someone other than the woman he had been with when I had last seen him. When I asked him about his former girlfriend, he replied, "Oh, we are great friends, and I am so grateful to God for the role she played in my life."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"For a while I thought she was the 'one.' But God had other plans long term for both of us. I do believe, however, that he brought us together for a season to teach us both a lot about ourselves and to bring about some healing. I had had so much hurt in the past, and she was so accepting and nurturing. Her love was very important to my becoming someone who could love again. Although I now know she was not the right one for me to marry, our relationship was really good for both of us and prepared us for future relationships."

God uses relationships to heal us and to change us. Although we are not suggesting that dating be the primary place that someone seeks healing (this is a horrible idea), it is a place where good things happen in people's souls. People benefit from good relationships. People can have good dating relationships where they learn, are healed, grow, and are stretched, even when the relationship does not lead to marriage. It has value in a person's life.

5. *Dating is relational and has value in and of itself.*

Joshua Harris says that people seek their own gratification in dating. While some people certainly use others selfishly in the dating realm, others enjoy getting to know another person, and they give and receive in a godly way, just not in a way that leads to marriage.

Getting to know someone, spending time with him, and sharing things with him is “intimacy.” This knowing another person deeply is love. It is relationship, and it is holy and good. But in dating it is not *complete*. People who are not married do not give parts of themselves; they restrain from sexual union, for example. But, their other sharing has real value and is a wonderful thing, for no other reason than the love and relationship itself. It is its own end. God has said that love—and not just married love—is the fulfillment of the entire law. When two singles love each other, give to each other, and share something in life, although the relationship has limits of both body and heart, it has value as well.

6. *Dating lets someone learn what he or she likes in the opposite sex.*

We mentioned a woman above who would have done well to find out in dating that “nice” was not all it was cracked up to be. But there are other things people need to learn that are not based in this kind of pain. In her case, she was making up for her father’s problems. Other people just do not know what kind of person they might really like and be good with. Everyone has some ideals and some natural attractions. Some of those may be good, and some may be rooted in sickness.

Not everyone knows what people he likes and what people are good for him. What is it like to spend a lot of time with a driver personality? For some it is heaven, for others, hell. What is it like to be around an intellectual person day after day? For some, it may be very stimulating. For others, very dry and boring. And we could go on and on. What we sometimes think we like is not what would really be good for us long term, but we have to find this out. Dating gives people a context to meet and spend time with a wide variety of people. They can find out what they like, what they need, and what is good for them.

7. *Dating gives a context to learn sexual self-control and other delay of gratification.*

Good dating allows people the opportunity to have a relationship and forgo sex. This delaying of gratification teaches something very valuable for marriage: the relationship and doing the best for the other person is more important than self-gratification and sexual expression. Some married couples do not know how to relate, and one or both use sex to substitute for relationship. Dating within God's limits makes people learn how to relate to one another while denying sexual expression. Dating done correctly teaches self-control and delay of gratification. Both of those are prerequisites for any marriage to work.

Dating can be done poorly and can lead to hurt and pain. Dating can be done well and can lead to wonderful fruits in the life of the teen and the adult single. *Boundaries in Dating* is designed to help you find the secrets of dating successfully and avoid the pitfalls of dating poorly.

If you will take this book seriously, seek God as deeply as you know how, establish a healthy community of friends to support you in the process, then dating can be something wonderful indeed. It can be fun, spiritually fulfilling, and growth producing. Keep your boundaries, and enjoy the process. Get involved in life, but remember God's boundaries and the way that he wants you to live a fulfilled, but holy life. It was expressed well in Solomon's advice to the young man (which also applies to young women): "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things" (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

Dating can be a great time of life, but it must be balanced with God's boundaries of what is good. We hope that this book helps you find that safety, fulfillment, growth, and freedom.

Part One

You and Your Boundaries

Why Boundaries in Dating?

So what do I do, set a bomb underneath his chair?” Heather exploded, only partly in jest. She was having lunch with her best friend, Julie. The conversation focused on her ongoing frustration with Todd, Heather’s boyfriend for the past year. Heather cared deeply for him and was ready to pursue marriage. Though he was loving, responsible, and fun, Todd had shown no sign of making any real commitment to the relationship. The couple enjoyed being together, yet anytime Heather tried to talk about getting serious, Todd would make a joke or skate around the issue. At thirty-three, Todd valued his freedom and saw no reason for anything in his life to change.

Heather’s outburst was a response to something Julie had said: “You really need to help Todd get moving forward.” Heather’s words were tinted with frustration, hurt, and a good deal of discouragement. Frustration because she and Todd seemed to be on different tracks. Hurt because her love felt unrequited. And discouraged because she had invested so much of her heart, time, and energy into the relationship. For the past year, Heather had made Todd a high emotional priority in her life. She had given up activities she enjoyed; she had given up relationships she valued. She had tried to become the kind of person she

thought Todd would be attracted to. And now it looked like this investment was going nowhere.

No Kids Allowed

Welcome to dating. If you have been in this unique type of relationship, you are probably familiar with Heather and Todd's scenario. Two people are genuinely attracted to each other and start going out. They are hopeful that the relationship will become something special that will lead to marriage and a life-long soul mate. Things look good for a while, but somehow something breaks down between them, causing heartache, frustration, and loneliness. And, more often than not, the scenario repeats itself in other relationships down the line.

Some people blame dating itself for all of this, thinking that it's not a healthy activity. They would rather find an alternative, such as group friendships until two people have selected each other to court exclusively. Though dating has its difficulties, we would not take this view. We believe in dating. We did it a lot personally, having been single a combined total of seventy-five years. And we think it offers lots of good things, such as opportunities to grow personally and learn how to relate to people, for starters.

However, dating does have its risks. That is why we say, *no kids allowed*. That doesn't mean teens shouldn't date, but it does mean one's maturity is very important here. By its very nature, dating is experimental, with little commitment initially, so someone can get out of a relationship without having to justify himself much. Putting lots of emotional investment into a relationship can be dangerous. Thus, dating works best between two responsible people.

Problems in Freedom and Responsibility

This book is not about the nature of dating, however. You cannot do a lot about that. Rather, we are writing about the prob-

lems people have in how they conduct their dating lives. There is a great deal you can do about that.

Simply put, many of the struggles people experience in dating relationships are, at heart, *caused by some problem in the areas of freedom and responsibility*. By freedom, we mean your ability to make choices based on your values, rather than choosing out of fear or guilt. Free people make commitments because they feel it's the right thing to do, and they are wholehearted about it. By responsibility, we mean your ability to execute your tasks in keeping the relationship healthy and loving, as well as being able to say no to things you shouldn't be responsible for. Responsible people shoulder their part of the dating relationship, but they don't tolerate harmful or inappropriate behavior.

Dating is ultimately about love. People seek it through dating. When they find it, and it matures, they often make deep commitments to each other. Freedom and responsibility are necessary for love to develop in dating. When two individuals allow each other freedom and take ownership of the relationship, they are creating an environment for love to grow and mature. Freedom and responsibility create a safe and secure environment for a couple to love, trust, explore, and deepen their experience of each other.

Actually, these two elements are necessary for any successful relationship, not just dating. Marriage, friendship, parenting, and business connections depend on freedom and responsibility in order for the attachment to flourish. God designed love so that there can be no fear (loss of freedom) in love, for perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). We are to speak the truth in love to each other (Ephesians 4:15), taking responsibility to protect love by confronting problems.

We believe that healthy boundaries are the key to preserving freedom, responsibility, and ultimately love, in your dating life. Establishing and keeping good limits can do a great deal

to not only cure a bad relationship, but make a good one better. So, before we take a look at the ways that dating problems arise from freedom and responsibility conflicts, let's take a brief look at what boundaries are and how they function in your dating relationships.

What Are Boundaries?

You may not be familiar with the term *boundary*. For some people, *boundaries* may bring up images of walls, barriers to intimacy, or even selfishness. Yet that is not the case, especially in the dating arena. If you understand what boundaries are and do, they can be one of the most helpful tools in your life to develop love, responsibility, and freedom. Let's take a look at what a boundary is, its functions and purpose, and some examples.

A Property Line

Simply put, a boundary is a *property line*. Just as a physical fence marks out where your yard ends and your neighbor's begins, a personal boundary distinguishes what is your emotional or personal property, and what belongs to someone else. You can't see your own boundary. However, you can tell it is there when someone crosses it. When another person tries to control you, tries to get too close to you, or asks you to do something you don't think is right, you should feel some sense of protest. Your boundary has been crossed.

The Functions of Boundaries

Boundaries serve two important functions. First, they *define* us. Boundaries show what we are and are not; what we agree and disagree with; what we love and hate. God has many clear boundaries. He loves the world (John 3:16); he loves cheerful givers (2 Corinthians 9:7). He hates haughty eyes and a lying tongue (Proverbs 6:16–17). As people made in his image, we also are to be honest and truthful about what we are and are not.

Dating goes much better when you are defined. When you are clear about your values, preferences, and morals, you solve many problems before they start. For example, a woman may tell a guy she is going out with that she is serious about her spiritual life, and desires that in people she is close to. She is letting him know about something that defines her, and it is out front between them, so that he will know who she is.

The second function of boundaries is that they *protect* us. Boundaries keep good things in, and bad things out. When we don't have clear limits, we can expose ourselves to unhealthy and destructive influences and people. Prudent people see danger and hide from it (Proverbs 27:12). For example, a man and woman who are getting closer in their relationship may want to set some limits on dating other people, so as to protect each other's hearts from unnecessary harm. Boundaries protect by letting others know what you will and will not tolerate.

Examples of Boundaries

There are several kinds of limits we can set and use in dating, all depending on the circumstances. Here are a few:

- Words: telling someone no and being honest about your disagreement
- The truth: bringing reality to a problem
- Distance: allowing time or physical space between two people to protect or as a consequence for irresponsible behavior
- Other people: using supportive friends to help keep a limit

Sometimes you will use these boundaries to simply let your date know your heart: "I am sensitive and wanted you to know that, so that we can be aware that I might get hurt easily." At other times, you may need to use boundaries to confront a problem and protect yourself or the relationship: "I will not go as far as you

want sexually, and if you continue pushing, I will not see you again.” Either way, boundaries give you freedom and choices.

What’s Inside Your Boundaries

Remember that boundaries are a fence protecting your property. In dating, your property is your own soul. Boundaries surround the life God has given you to maintain and mature, so that you can become the person he created you to be. Here are some of the contents of your self that boundaries define and protect.

- Your love: your deepest capacity to connect and trust
- Your emotions: your need to own your feelings and not be controlled by someone else’s feelings
- Your values: your need to have your life reflect what you care about most deeply
- Your behaviors: your control over how you act in your dating relationship
- Your attitudes: your stances and opinions about yourself and your date

You and only you are responsible for what is inside your boundaries. If someone else is controlling your love, emotions, or values, they are not the problem. Your inability to set limits on their control is the problem. Boundaries are the key to keeping your very soul safe, protected, and growing.

You will find many, many examples and situations in this book about how to apply boundary principles in your dating life. Just remember that you are not being mean when you say no. Instead, you may be saving yourself or even the relationship from harm.

How Boundary Problems Show Themselves

There are lots of ways that dating suffers when freedom and responsibility are not appropriately present. Here are a few of them.

Loss of Freedom to Be Oneself

Sometimes, one person will give up her identity and lifestyle to keep a relationship together. Then, when her true feelings emerge, the other person doesn't like who she really is, having never been exposed to her real self. Heather, in the introductory illustration, had lost some of her freedom in this way.

Being with the Wrong Person

When we have well-developed boundaries, we are more drawn to healthy, growing people. We are clear about what we will tolerate and what we love. Good boundaries run off the wackos, and attract people who are into responsibility and relationship. But when our boundaries are unclear or undeveloped, we run the risk of allowing people inside who shouldn't be there.

Dating from Inner Hurt Rather Than Our Values

Boundaries have so much to do with our values, what we believe and live out in life. When our boundaries are clear, our values can dictate what kinds of people fit the best. But often, people with poor boundaries have some soul-work to do, and they unknowingly attempt to work it out in dating. Instead of picking people because of their values, they react to their inner struggles and choose in some devastating ways. For example, the woman with controlling parents may be drawn to controlling men. Conversely, another woman with the same sort of background may react the opposite way, picking passive and compliant men so as to never be controlled. Either way, the hurt part inside is picking, not the values.

Not Dating

Sadly, some people who really want to be dating are on the sidelines, wondering if they will ever find anyone, or if anyone will find them. This is often caused by boundary conflicts, when

people withdraw to avoid hurt and risk, and end up empty-handed.

Doing Too Much in the Relationship

Many people with boundary problems overstep their bounds and don't know when to stop giving of themselves. They will put their lives and hearts on hold for someone, only to find out that the other person was willing to take all that, but never really wanted to deeply commit. Good boundaries help you know how much to give, and when to stop giving.

Freedom without Responsibility

Freedom must always be accompanied by responsibility. When one person enjoys the freedom of dating, and takes no responsibility for himself, problems occur. Someone who is "having his cake and eating it too" in his dating relationship is in this category. This is Todd's situation. He enjoyed Heather but didn't want to take any responsibility to develop the relationship, though a great deal of time had passed.

Control Issues

More often than not, one person wants to get serious sooner than another. Sometimes in this situation, the more serious person attempts to rein in the other person by manipulation, guilt, domination, and intimidation. Love has become secondary, and control has become primary.

Not Taking Responsibility to Say No

This describes the "nice guy" who allows disrespect and poor treatment by his date, and either minimizes the reality that he is being mistreated, or simply hopes that one day she will stop. He disowns his responsibility to set a limit on bad things happening to him.

Sexual Impropriety

Couples often have difficulty keeping appropriate physical limits. They either avoid taking responsibility for the issue, or one person is the only one with the “brakes,” or they ignore the deeper issues that are driving the activity.

There are many more ways that dating can become misery because of freedom and responsibility problems. We will go over many of them in the book. And, as you will see, understanding and applying boundaries in the right ways can make a world of difference in how you approach the dating arena.

In the next chapter, we will look at the first and foremost boundary line of any relationship: truth.

Take-Away Tips

- Dating involves risks, and boundaries help you navigate those risks.
- Boundaries are your “property lines” which define and protect you.
- Learn to value what your boundaries protect, such as your emotions, values, behaviors, and attitudes.
- Boundaries help you be yourself, instead of losing yourself in someone else.
- You want the person you date to take responsibility for his life, as you do.
- Good boundaries will help you choose better quality people because they help you become a better person.

Boundaries in Dating

Getting A Degree Without Going Broke

By Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend

Boundaries in Dating provides a way to think, solve problems, and enjoy the benefits of dating in the fullest way, including increasing the ability to find and commit to a marriage partner. It's your road map to the kind of enjoyable, rewarding dating that can take you from weekends alone to a lifetime with the soul mate you've longed for.

If many of your dating experiences have been difficult, *Boundaries in Dating* could revolutionize the way you handle relationships. Even if you're doing well, the insights you'll gain from this much-needed book can help you fine-tune or even completely readjust important areas of your dating life.

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