

# Episode 1: Boundaries

RSVP Podcast Season 1

## ***Introduction***

JT: A wonderful day to all! My name is Jo-ed Tome, your companion in responding to the divine invitation. Welcome to the first episode of the RSVP podcast. Today, we will talk about BOUNDARIES — what they are and why they are important to us psychologically and spiritually.

Sharing with us her experiences and insights on boundaries is Ms. Lita Quimson-Feliciano, the executive director of On the Third Day Renewal and Formation Center. A wonderful day, Lita

AQF: Thanks, Jo-ed. A wonderful day to you, too.

JT: How are you today?

AQF: I am well, thank you! I am quite excited for this episode.

JT: Yeah so let's get right on it. As mentioned earlier, we will be talking about boundaries. So what are boundaries and why is it important to talk about them?

## ***Part 1: What are boundaries and why are they important?***

AQF: Well, boundaries, in the physical sense, are like fences in a neighborhood. The fence around my house shows where my property ends and where my neighbor's property begins. This physical boundary creates a form of safety and order for me and my neighbors. It gives us a sense of ownership and responsibility. Within my boundaries, I know that I am safe and protected because only those who I allow to come in can enter.

JT: Boundaries offer us some protection. They communicate where something like a property begins and where another one begins.

AQF: That's right. Boundaries protect us from others and protect others from us at the same time. When somebody violates those boundaries, we feel trespassed which often results in trouble. In the same way that when someone who is not welcome enters my property, I feel threatened. I know that they should not be there and that my boundaries have not been respected. Thus, I am careful not to violate my neighbor's boundaries as well. My neighbor can have a different taste for the design of her house or a different choice of plants for her garden which I may not like. But since his house and garden are within his boundaries, I have to respect it. I won't go and try to repaint or prune her plants to my liking.

JT: That's very important--knowing my limits so I do not go and meddle with other people's properties and lives.

AQF: That's right. Those are boundaries between myself and others. But we are not here to talk about fences and paints and gardens, although those are very interesting topics for me, too. What I would like to focus on are some forms of boundaries that are more internal or personal and not readily observable but have such great impact in our lives. While fences protect our properties, personal boundaries protect our soul.

JT: And how we wish our souls are as easy to protect as our houses or gardens.

AQF: It is really very challenging. Setting healthy personal boundaries is not as easy as defining one's property.

***Part 2: What are the different types of boundaries and how are they established?***

JT: So tell us about personal boundaries.

AQF: Perhaps we can start with a very simple yet, for many, very difficult thing to say.

JT: And that is...?

AQF: The two-letter word, "No. N-O." Many people struggle with saying "no". The word "no" is one of the most powerful protections we can provide our soul because it allows us to choose to NOT do or say something we do not want. It prevents us from being pressured or manipulated.

JT: I can think of a lot of personal experiences and stories shared with me about this.

AQF: Yes, it happens a lot. Sometimes people need to know what we want and how we want to be treated and saying "no" is key here. We can communicate our likes and dislikes and allow people to know where we stand. In the face of conflict one might say, "I don't like it when you yell at me," or "I will walk away for now and we will have this conversation when you are calmer."

JT: It seems also useful for those who are exhausted but could not say no to, say for example, extra work or to a party invitation.

AQF: Precisely. Those people are prone to burnout which may result in resentment towards others. The soul suffers when we say "yes" when what we really want to say is "no". In these circumstances, saying "no" is saying "yes" to our soul.

JT: I wonder how God's heart is when we are able to finally say "no".

AQF:

JT: What is another kind of boundaries?

AQF: Another one is time boundaries. We are taught at an early age about time boundaries: what time we are supposed to eat, what time to go to sleep, and what time to do our morning routine. This routine gets more embedded in our system as we grow up. Take

for instance our time attending school. We follow a schedule for leaving the house so as not to be late for school, and for when we will be picked up after. There is a time for our afternoon rest, and a time for studying and doing our homework. There is also a time for all our extra-curricular activities.

These time boundaries make the foundation of our good habits. Imagine a schoolmate who doesn't have good time boundaries. Probably you had a classmate who was always late: late for classes and late for submissions of papers and projects. Or maybe there was a fellow student who joined so many organizations that they found themselves having too much on their plates. Oftentimes, they have an inclination to procrastinate which results in them being all over the place.

JT: That's really relatable!

AQF: Does it remind you of some people?

JT: A good number!

AQF: This is a dangerous path to be in because if left uncorrected, these bad habits set us up for a difficult life in the bigger world outside of school, where deadlines have to be met and commitments have to be fulfilled.

JT: This creates a self-inflicted challenge in a way.

AQF: Yes, it does.

### ***Part 3: What are the main factors that affect a person's boundaries?***

JT: Tell us about some factors that affect one's boundaries.

AQF: Everything begins with our upbringing. The way we are brought up will most likely be based on the demands of our culture.

Take for example Japanese culture, which is almost universally regarded as highly boundaried, some might even say it is *over*-boundaried. In general, Japanese workers are very disciplined and organized. They are molded like that by their culture even at a very young age. Compared with other cultures, individualizing or standing out is not encouraged. One of the things you can readily observe is the bowing gesture as a form of greeting. It creates space and distance between people. Be careful about standing too close as you might trespass the other's personal space.

Compare that with our own in the Philippines, which, placed alongside Japanese culture, is more relaxed, and allows greater room for individual self-expression. Our form of greeting is also shockingly different from theirs. Whereas they keep distance, we Filipinos close that distance by greeting our family and friends with hugs, and kisses on the cheek. What would be a no-no in one country would be totally acceptable in another.

JT: Yes, your context when you were growing up plays an important role in shaping your values.

AQF: But of course culture is a broad factor. There is more to be seen in our upbringing. When our parents themselves, for example, have not been taught proper boundaries, it would most likely be that we would not learn healthy boundaries. I know of stories of family who live in less favorable conditions. Big families living in a cramped house where everything happens in one room. In the day time, the room is where they cook, eat, and watch tv. At night, everything is cleared to make way for the sleeping mats. The space allocation in itself inhibits people from having boundaries. There is no privacy and parents don't have space from their children. Parents will find it difficult to have intimacy when they are surrounded by their children. There cannot be any private conversations. For everybody else, there is no space to express oneself. Sometimes there is not even space to have your own personal belongings, and everything that is inside the house is shared. This physical environment has an effect on your internal state too, and you might feel that there is no space for your emotional expressions.

JT: That is a common experience in many Filipinos. How, then, do we establish healthy boundaries?

#### ***Part 4: How can a person establish healthy boundaries?***

AQF: At this point it is important to remember that boundaries, while they protect us, are not solid walls built to imprison us in order to keep others out. Boundaries are meant to be opened and closed like gates. We are here in this world to live in community and help one another as well as take care of ourselves. There has to be a balance of protecting ourselves with the objective of being emotionally healthy enough to give to others. Boundaries ultimately are there in order for us to relate better with our neighbors.

Having said that, the starting point for establishing healthy boundaries is self-awareness or knowing oneself. Intentional silence and contemplation is a good way of doing this. Practicing these prayer methods would increase your self awareness and guide you where you have received enough and have enough to give. When you are emptied, you need to boundary again to be able to load your soul up with goodness and rest so you can be ready to give again. It's like a tank of gasoline that needs to load up before it runs again.

Another boundary that you can be intentional about is giving yourself time for relationships that give life. Spending time with friends who validate you, encourage you, accept you, and love you is very good for your soul. Investing in relationships like this means we need to set aside time for life giving relationships. How do you spend your weekends? Part of a sabbath is to ensure that it can be spent with people we love, people we want to show love and kindness to, people we want to invest in.

Building self-awareness is a lifetime process and is one of the most important practices that we can incorporate in our lives.

At the start, people who are learning to establish their boundaries will seem to be harsh because they will probably be overboundaried. As they grow deeper in self-awareness, they open up to a new lifestyle that is a combination of self-care -- prayer, exercise, study, relationship -- and community-care or giving to others. This person is not needy; they do not attach themselves unhealthily to others but are free to be present and to be

of service to others. Too much of anything is unhealthy, therefore, balance is what you want to achieve.

Once you know the boundaries you want for yourself, you are able to live a healthy, balanced life of self-care and community-care.

JT: Those are all very important reminders. With all those, what does a person with healthy boundaries look like?

***Part 5: What does a person with healthy boundaries look like?***

AQF: A person with healthy boundaries knows their exact purpose on this earth. They are driven by that purpose and know how to organize their lives in order to achieve that purpose. They know that they have to be physically, mentally, and emotionally fit to live out that purpose. Therefore they take care of their bodies, their minds, and their emotions so that they could serve their communities in the best way possible.

A person with healthy boundaries is well balanced. And as a result of their being well balanced, the allocated time for whatever they are doing is focused, well-planned and well-performed; they do not do things in a haphazard way. They are well rested. They can exercise creativity not only in their normal, everyday lives, but also in times of crisis. This person is well grounded and doesn't easily get offended. They remain focused on their direction and are not easily swayed by others' unhelpful comments and opinions.

This person though may seem selfish at first, but is really not selfish at all. Their boundaries are for loving others and teaching others to live a boundaried life, so that they may also keep themselves in good shape to fulfill their own purpose. Boundaried people have influenced many others and used their giftedness to the best of their ability.

Because a person with healthy boundaries does self-care, they are able to hear the leading of the Holy Spirit. They know when they themselves have been offensive, and are open to doing better by admitting their wrongs, and asking for forgiveness. Consequently, they are also able to release forgiveness to others because they are

aware of their own imperfections and can be more understanding to others' imperfections.

This person believes in an authentic community who will speak truth to one another and be formable when the community sees things that the person may not see. He or she would even appreciate accompaniment because of the humility in his or her spirit.

### ***Conclusion***

JT: Summary of important points

Thank AQF

Invite to watch out for the next episode

Once again this is Jo-ed Tome and this has been the RSVP Podcast.