

Day 5 – Minding the fence

Course: Climb Your Mountain

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All throughout our hike we'll encounter fences. Most of them look flimsy as they are only put up over the summer to keep cattle in their grazing pastures and not have them roaming all over.

Those fences consist of little more than some plastic stalks with electric wire stretched between them. The cattle is kept in the pasture because they've learned that coming in contact with that wire will give them a small but unpleasant electric shock.

We on the other hand can often easily pass over or under those fences. Often times farmers have even constructed steps or a gate that allows us to easily bypass the electric shock and step into or out of the pasture; crossing a boundary.

Very occasionally we come upon fences that are meant to keep us humans from falling off a cliff or stumble down a mountain.

Mostly though the boundaries we absolutely need to mind, the ones beyond which potentially deadly dangers lie, are not actual fences but rather natural boundaries like steep drops, huge boulders, raging mountain streams and the like.

From a distance it can seem like nothing serious lies beyond them, but upon coming closer it is clear these are boundaries that need to be respected.

We're also bound by our own abilities. We have to know when we're about to do something that goes beyond our capabilities. This too can be potentially dangerous.

So there are 2 kinds of boundaries we have to be mindful of while moving through mountains (or anywhere else in Nature):

1. Visible boundaries like fences, steep drops, etc.
2. Invisible boundaries, like our abilities, fitness, etc.

Being aware of and honouring these boundaries will help you stay safe while out in Nature.

When it comes to your core values and using as the foundation for living a more balanced life, as a tool to help you climb your mountain with more ease, you have to be able to guard them (and yourself) against people trampling all over them. You have to be able to set clear boundaries; to erect a fence around them.

Intentionally living your values.

Remember when I said that your core values can be really solid fence post? And how — when those fence posts aren't put in the ground solidly — it can be real easy to push over the fence? To let people push us around?

When the posts are planted solidly the fence will be strong and the boundaries they protect won't be easily crossed.

When, however, the posts are wobbly, they are little more than the electric fence that keep the cows in their meadows. Easy to go over or under and not enough to keep people out.

So to intentionally live your values it is very important that you can set strong boundaries.

Unfortunately, though your values may be metaphorical fence posts; they're not an actual physical fence. Imagine how much easier life be if people could clearly see what your boundaries are!



Minding the fence

As you start living your values, in the beginning you have to pay close attention to them and the boundaries that support them.

When you forget to pay attention, before you know it you'll be slipping back into the very behaviours and habits you want to leave behind.

Having and maintaining boundaries is crucial to living your values. Just like it is crucial to create more time and space for yourself and living a more balanced life.

Having poor or no boundaries allows people to continually invade your personal space, not take you and your feelings into account and basically trample all over you and your values.

This (eventually) leads to anger, resentment and frustration within you. Sometimes without you being aware of why you feel the way you do.

Healthy and strong boundaries on the other hand help keep you mentally and emotionally stable. Like having strong values, they help you make decisions on what's best for you and not just for others.

Some examples

In professional relationships

Keeping one's personal and professional lives separate. As a leader in a professional capacity you're not responsible for every aspect of an employee's life.

In friendships

When in the middle of packing for a long trip a friend unexpectedly arrives to catch up, you might not want them to stay for too long because you won't be ready in time for when you have to leave

Or you may not want to ever lend friends money because you believe that too easily leads to ruined friendships.

In romantic relationships

You may not want to spend every spare minute with your partner, but instead want to also have time for your own friends and hobbies.

Establishing clear boundaries

Examine existing boundaries in all areas of your life

- Relationship
- Family
- Friends
- Work / co-workers
- Etc.

Where do you need to establish clearer boundaries?

When you're not sure, just think of situations where you find yourself constantly complaining, resentful, taken advantage of, angry, doing things you don't want to.

Or when you find yourself saying "Yes" when you really want to say "No".

What are those clearer boundaries?

Communicating clear boundaries

How can you communicate your boundaries in such a way that people will respect them?

- Define / express them in an assertive but respectful way and do it very clearly and keep it with/on you.

The statement should include:

1/ what happened or is being asked of you

2/ your boundary and how you feel about what happened or is being asked of you



3/ what you want to happen instead / in the future

For example:

Thanks for inviting me to do that with you. I actually don't like [insert activity]. However, I'd love to hang out with you. Perhaps we can do something else we both enjoy?

- Emanate corresponding energy
- Act accordingly
- Follow through

Reminders for empowered boundary setting

Setting strong boundaries can be challenging, especially in close and/or important relationships or when you've never really done so before.

Boundaries serve to protect your integrity and your energy. You put them in place to protect the relationship you have with yourself.

So remember:

(Adapted from Jacinta M. Jimenez PsyD, BCC)

- Setting a boundary is not to change other people's behaviour. It's to assert your needs.
- You can't control how other people will respond to your boundaries.
- You're allowed to change your boundaries over time and across contexts.
- You're allowed to tell other people what you are and aren't capable of giving.
- You're allowed to have boundaries that look different from other people's boundaries.
- You're allowed to have needs that look different from other people's needs.

Where do you need to set stronger boundaries?

Examine your roles, beliefs, values and the categories they fall into. Think back on times when you were aggravated, frustrated, angry, etc. Was a boundary being crossed? Which one(s)?
