

LivingIntegrated®

FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

7 DEVELOP HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

IN THIS PRACTICE:

- Boundaries as Useful for Your Well-being
- Identifying Areas that Need New Boundaries
- Reinforce New Boundaries with New Behaviors
- Boundaries Work Both Ways
- Practice Seven Assignment

Go to <https://youtu.be/uDAYYbrTUA0> now and watch the introductory video for this Practice.

YOUR WELL-BEING

You may be tempted, like I certainly was, to think of boundaries as negatives, as limits. And boundaries are limits, for sure. But boundaries are useful for your well-being. They are the limits that lead to life and health and goodness.

Those of us who've become compulsive—especially with our sexuality—have to work really, really hard at re-working our boundaries.

Establishing new boundaries is our way of getting our lives back. And there is no short-cut around healthy boundaries.

Examined, reconfigured and reinforced boundaries are essential for our own healing.

IDENTIFYING AREAS THAT NEED NEW BOUNDARIES

Think carefully about what behaviors you've been engaging in which are problematic to you.

Specifically think about sexual behaviors which are unhealthy, counter to your values, relationally destructive, disrespectful to yourself or disrespectful to others.

- *What behaviors* are the ones you want to change?
- *When* are those behaviors happening?
- *Where* are those behaviors happening?
- *With whom or with what* are those behaviors happening?

These are the specific areas for which you need to develop new boundaries for yourself.

Let's say you've fallen into cruising websites (what) late at night (when), and this behavior often leads to surfing porn and masturbating. A new boundary to develop is not using the Internet after nine or ten at night.

An even better boundary would be not using your computer for anything—even work—after that time.

Seem too limiting? Too radical? That's the point.

“

We have to be willing to do whatever it takes to get well.

”

Putting healthy limits in place is not easy. If it were, everyone would do it and we wouldn't have problems.

You can do this. And it will allow you to develop different and healthier uses of your time.

REINFORCE NEW BOUNDARIES WITH NEW BEHAVIORS

When a new boundary means removing a behavior, it's important to do more than remove the problematic behavior. Replace it with something positive.

So, if you're not going to use the nine pm to sleep time for surfing websites, then what are you going to use it for? Find a different way to engage your brain. Use the time with healthy behaviors. Come up with something that will be rewarding and healthy—a positive.

I've learned that late in the evening it's good if I avoid watching television alone. I stay off the computer. Even though my software monitoring program effectively keeps me from looking at porn, just being on the computer creates the same restless, reactive mindset that channel surfing on television does.

The positive replacement I came up with is to read mystery novels. And now I've cultivated a number of favorite writers I like to read. This particular activity may not work for you. But there's something that will, and it's your job to find it.

It's important to cultivate a practice of surveying your patterns and habits on a regular basis. That's why this is one of the Practices—it's a thing we repeat doing so as to get better at it. Develop a routine of looking for areas in your life where you see yourself moving back towards addictive thinking and behaving.

Whenever you identify a behavior that is taking you backwards or wasting your time, make specific changes to *what* you are doing, *when* and *where* and *with whom*. Be specific and make commitments you will keep. Tell someone about them.

As you change your boundaries, and therefore how you spend your time, you'll begin to change your thinking habits, reallocate your energy for useful rather than selfish purposes and strengthen your spirituality. It works, it really does.

BOUNDARIES WORK BOTH WAYS

Healthy boundaries actually function in two ways. They're about both *what we keep out* and *what we keep in*.

For example, think about viewing porn and masturbating. In looking at images of others we're letting stimuli into our minds for self-gratification. Boundary work for porn-viewing means cutting off this intake.

But what about outgo? Compulsive people often have issues about what they give away about themselves, physically and emotionally.

For instance, do you engage in relational behaviors where you do things for other people so as to please them, derive some emotional security or get some reciprocal sexual activity? Do you share too much of your thoughts or feelings with others who are not safe, healthy people for you?

Establishing boundaries regarding what you give away is an important category to review and reestablish healthy boundaries.

ASSIGNMENT FOR ENGAGING THE SEVENTH PRACTICE— DEVELOP HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

1. Spend some time thinking about your compulsive sexual behaviors; look back over your schedule, think about the different seasons of your life, really review your life to find what are the behaviors you want to change, when are you engaging in them, where and with whom?
2. Come back to this over several days and write down everything you can think of (like earlier Practices, this is only for your eyes)
3. As you identify what you want to remove, what healthy, positive behaviors can you replace them with?
4. Write out the specifics of what you want to change (what, when, who, where) and what your positive replacements are
5. Share your boundaries with a safe person, preferably someone who is also working on this recovery; they need to have some understanding of this compulsive behavior and they need to be confidential and safe; it's important to voice our intentions to someone else as a way of strengthening our commitment to them

THREE BIBLE TEXTS FOR DEVELOPING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

“Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.”

Psalm 25:4

“In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.”

Proverbs 12:28

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Mathew 6:10

PRAYER

*Loving God, all of my days belong to You. I have not used my days and hours well. Help me to change the way I use the time you have given to me in ways that are good for me and honor You.
Amen.*

IN THE NEXT PRACTICE,

we will explore how healthy lifestyle patterns can help reinforce our recovery.

