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## What's OK, What's Not OK

### Defining your Boundary Basics

From *Boundary Boss — The Essential Guide to Talk True, Be Seen, and (Finally) Live Free* by Terri Cole (Sounds True).

Get centered and quiet in a place in your home that feels safe, where you can quietly reflect and journal. Break out your journal and get ready to uncover what does and does not work for you. The more you acknowledge what you do and don't like, the easier it will be to identify what boundaries you want in all areas of your life. Thinking it through in advance, rather than on the fly, in the moment, sets you up success.

Use the prompts below as a guide to write out an unedited list. Don't think about what people will or won't be willing to honor, just keep your own self in mind, and really tune into your body as well for important information. Keep this list as an ongoing inventory of boundaries and update as necessary. Remember, only you can know what is ok and not ok for you. And only you can teach others how to be with you in this skillful way.

**Home**— how do you prefer your surroundings? Think of temperature, noise, beauty, tidiness, etc.

**Work**— what do you like and want to do? What do you not want to do? Think of interactions with co-workers and colleagues. Think of working conditions, hours, etc.

**Finances**— Is it ok to loan money to friends or family? If so, what conditions apply? Do you want a lot of savings? Do you have a budget? Do you share banking accounts? Do you tell people what you make? Do you pay the dinner bill? How much do you spend on gifts?

**Love and dating**— phew, a big one! Casual or committed? What is your favorite form of communication? How do you like to problem solve? What are your standards around accountability and reliability? Who pays for what?

**Body**— do you tell people your age? Are there non-negotiable fidelities to your health (i.e., a daily walk, how much alcohol, when at time you go to bed).

**Personal space**—how much do you require? Do you hug or not? Are there certain questions that feel intrusive?

**Beliefs and opinions**— how do you want to navigate differences? How do you want to feel respected about yours?



**Your stuff**— do you loan your things out? If so, what are the agreements? Can people just borrow without asking? What if they break something?

**Communication**— listening, talking, validating, advice giving, mansplaining, curiosity, judgement...what are your boundaries and requests around all of that world?

**Social**— do you like parties, do you like big groups, or prefer one on one? Staying in or going out? Certain kinds of social groups?

**Relationships**— accountability, responsibility, kindness, respect...this is a big one.

Now...take it deeper

### *Preferences, Desires, and Deal-Breakers*

As you get clear about your boundaries, you'll want to understand the differences between preferences, desires, and deal-breakers. Knowing these distinctions will further clarify what is and isn't ok with you and to what degree.

**Preferences**— This means being partial to one option over another...coffee or tea? With others your preferences may sound like "I prefer it if you and I don't go to a lot of cocktail parties." And you may make some compromises where sometimes you attend, other times you do not, or you take separate cars so you can go home early. This is the world of compromise and collaboration.

**Desires**— Desires are a step up from preferences, as they reflect more potent wishes. Boundaries here are firmer. Consistently overstepped desires by a friend, co-worker, or significant other can mean that a new alliance needs to be created, or a firmer boundary set.

**Deal breakers**— Deal-breakers are non-negotiable boundaries.

Now go through your 'ok, not ok' list, and further refine the list to outlining which are the preferences, desires, and deal-breakers.