

## KNOW YOUR LIMITS!

### How to Mindfully Observe & Describe Your Limits

From *LOVING SOMEONE WITH BPD*

by Shari Manning

When you pay attention to and label your experience, your emotion immediately begins to regulate. But you also know more about how uncomfortable this situation is making you feel. And that tells you something important that you need to know to respond effectively to a person with BPD: what your limits are and when they are being crossed.

Identifying your limits and knowing when they are being crossed is something that I prefer to call *observing limits*, because I want to stress the need to observe yourself and the circumstances objectively. It's far too easy to view people with BPD as demanding and "manipulative" and therefore deserving of ultimatums, boundary setting, and "drawing the line." When you turn your full awareness to your physical sensations, thoughts, and urges, and then label your emotions, you gather information over time about where you have a true limit. And then you also have enough information to know when that limit is being crossed. You no longer have to subject

yourself to seething and stewing until suddenly you've "had it" and impulsively throw up a brick wall against your loved one with BPD.

Observing limits adroitly is a skill developed over time, but it's an important one to cultivate since important personal preferences often seem to get lost in emotionally charged interactions.

All of us have personal limits, and it's our job to maintain them. The crises in the lives of people with BPD and the lengths that we will go to help the people we love often result in our limits being stretched and crossed, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Unfortunately, research is really clear that there is a point of no return with limits. When they are pushed too far, they and the relationship are irreparable. So that that doesn't happen, we have to know where our limits are. The tough thing is that we don't know where our limits are until someone/something pushes up against them. For this reason, we need to observe to know our limits.

#### STEPS TO... OBSERVE YOUR LIMITS AND THEN TO EFFECTIVELY DESCRIBE YOUR LIMITS

1. Observe & Describe your experience of emotions, sensations, thoughts and urges.
2. Identify your possible limits (hint: they can be found inside of you, not outside).
3. Observe when a limit is crossed (or when you extend to your regret).
4. Do a Pros/Cons on whether and how to express your limits.
5. Effectively communicate your limit (having regulated your emotion to increase accurate expression and having validated your experience).

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