

• There is a central difference between living in a committed relationship and in single life. In single life the virtues of humility, compassion, attentiveness, caring, and patience are recommended. In a relationship they are required.

## A CHECKLIST ON BOUNDARIES IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

No one has the whole set of keys to the inner chambers of your being, and no one should. There always remains the mystery of your core and the task of maintaining boundaries neither too loosely nor too rigidly. We know our own preferences and moods rather than living reactively to those of others. As adults our love is unconditional, but our commitment is conditioned by how cooperative our partner is and how reasonable the demands of the relationship are. Here is a list that may help us see where we stand. The left side is about relationship as accommodation. The right side is about relationship as negotiation.

*When you give up your boundaries in a relationship you*

- Break commitments with friends because the person so important to you is suddenly available
- Do not notice how unhappy you are, since enduring is your main concern
- Do more and more for less and less
- Require the approval of others in order to have self-esteem

*When your boundaries are intact in a relationship you*

- Design your schedule in a cooperative way but respectful of your own needs and plans
- Recognize when you are happy or unhappy
- Do more when to do more gets results (your commitment to help fits and is based on its effectiveness)
- Take others' criticism as information with no diminishment of self-esteem

- Live hopefully while continuing to wait for change
- Are satisfied as long as you are coping and surviving
- Let another's promises or minimal improvement maintain your stalemate
- Have few hobbies because you have no attention span for self-directed activity; you are other directed
- Make exceptions for this person for things you would not tolerate in anyone else and accept his or her alibis or lies
- Are manipulated by flattery so that you lose objectivity
- Keep trying to create intimacy with a narcissist
- Are so strongly affected by another that you have become obsessive about him
- Will forsake every personal limit to get sex or the promise of it
- See your partner as causing your excitement
- Feel hurt and victimized but dare not show anger
- Live optimistically because you are co-working on change
- Are only satisfied if you are thriving
- Are encouraged only by mutual commitment to change
- Have excited interest in self-enhancing hobbies and projects whether or not the other joins you in them
- Have a personal standard that, albeit flexible, applies to everyone and are not afraid to ask for accountability
- Appreciate feedback and can distinguish it from attempts to manipulate
- Are open to relationships only with partners with whom reciprocal love is possible
- Are appropriately affected by your partner's behavior and take it as information
- Integrate sex so that you can enjoy it but never at the cost of your own integrity
- See your partner as stimulating your excitement
- Let yourself feel anger, say "Ouch!" and embark on a program to change your situation for the better

- Act out of compliance, compromise, and appeasement
- Do favors that you inwardly resist while being motivated by obligation or indebtedness (cannot say no)
- Cannot dismiss lingering guilt even after reasonable amends or no fault at all
- Disregard your own intuition in favor of wishful thinking
- Allow your partner to abuse you or your children, family, or friends
- Mostly feel afraid and confused
- Are enmeshed more and more in a drama that unfolds beyond your control
- Are living a life that is not yours and are perhaps not quite aware of it
- Believe you have no right to privacy or a life of your own
- Never believe you have given enough
- Fear your partner will leave or punish you if you disappoint him or her and cannot imagine or tolerate life without your partner
- Act out of agreement and negotiation
- Only do favors that are motivated by choice, and you cannot be guilt-tripped (can say no)
- Are satisfied and no longer resentful once amends are made
- Honor intuitions and distinguish them from wishes
- Insist others' boundaries be as safeguarded as your own
- Mostly feel secure and clear
- Are always aware of choices rather than feeling trapped or at the mercy of the other
- Are living a life that mostly reflects your deepest needs, values, and wishes
- Protect and enjoy your private matters without having to lie or be surreptitious
- Give generously and reasonably and then let go
- Trust yourself to be able to handle comings and goings and to survive quite comfortably if left alone; cannot be blackmailed by threats of abandonment

- Arrange things so that your partner will be protected from your real feelings or truth
- Tolerate your partner's addiction(s) even when they lead to abuse
- Forsake your own moral standards to please or hold on to someone
- Place your physical health at risk
- Are swayed by looks, charm, rhetoric, sex, history together, or financial security
- Give, loan, or invest money inappropriately
- Lose objectivity, intelligence, and personal powers
- Assertively and kindly express to the other what you feel, think, and want
- Confront addictive behavior and detach if change is not forthcoming
- Maintain your own principles with consistency
- Protect your body in all circumstances
- Enjoy the extras as desserts but are never controlled by them
- Handle money matters wisely, generously, and objectively
- Maintain your full range of personal discernment and power

*The above entries define*  
CODEPENDENCY.

*The above entries define*  
SELF-PARENTING.

## EGOLESS LOVE

Being reconciled to the love others can give means the end of putting demands on them. We cherish love unconditionally, in any form or size. At the same time, we do not make a commitment to someone if the love that person offers is inadequate. We do appreciate it when we have been given the best this person has to offer. But if the best is still unsatisfactory, the only question is: What do I do next? Most of us ask instead: What should he do next to satisfy me? In the face of what *is*, why do we come up with a *should*?