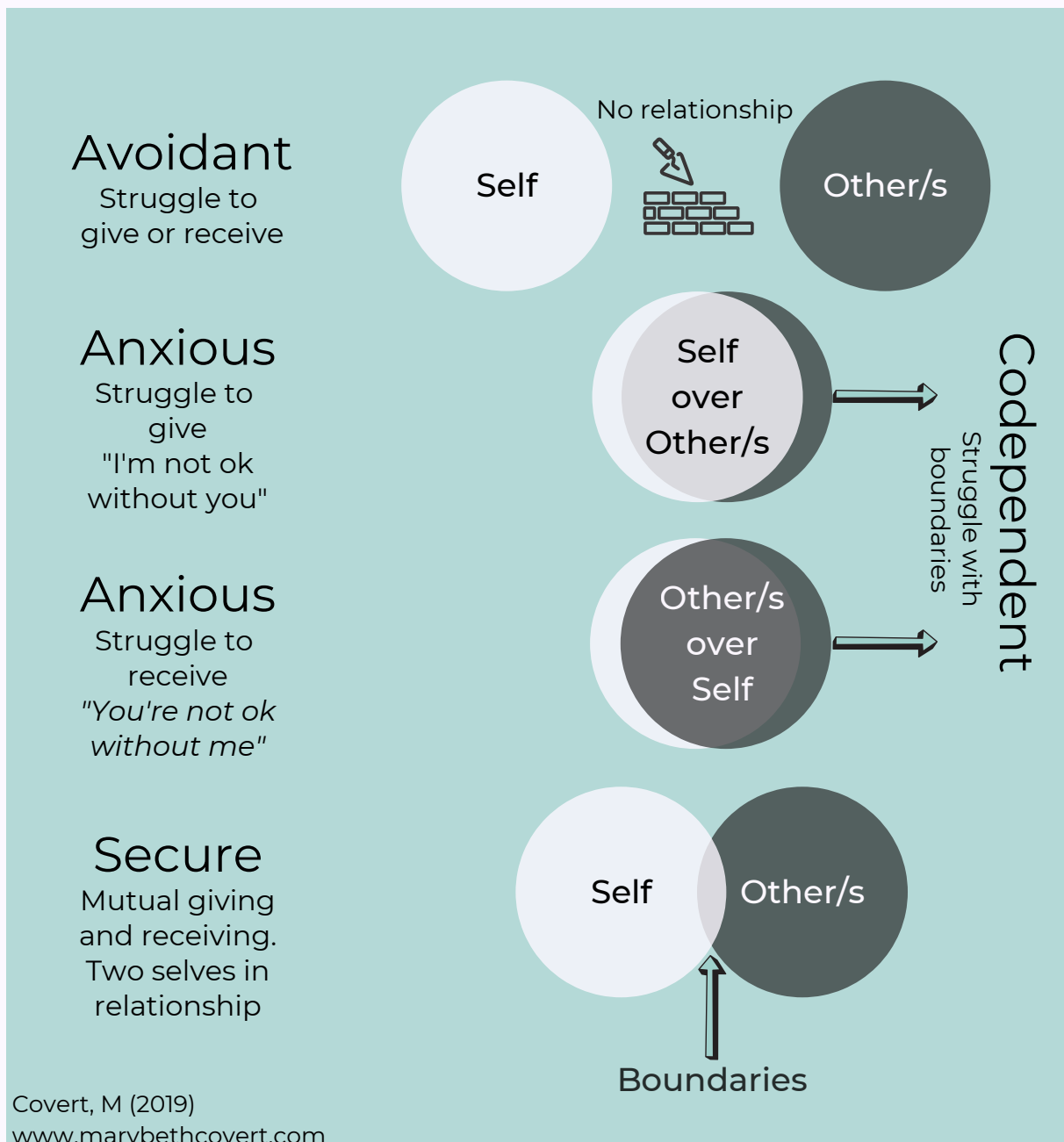


BOUNDARIES 101

"One of the most shocking findings of my work was the idea that the most compassionate people I have interviewed over the last 13 years were also the absolutely most boundaried."

-Brene Brown

ME & NOT ME



BOUNDARIES 101

"Compassionate people ask for what they need. They say no when they need to, and when they say yes they mean it. They're compassionate because their boundaries keep them out of resentment."

-Brené Brown

WHAT IS OK & WHAT IS NOT OK

Defining Your Boundaries

What are boundaries (generally):

"Boundaries define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows where each individual ends and someone else begins, leading each person to a sense of ownership and responsibility" (Cloud & Townsend, 1999). Brené Brown often defines boundaries as "what is ok and what is not ok."

What are *YOUR* boundaries (specifically):

Define your sacred ground by getting curious about what is and is not ok for you. Getting clear about your self-worth and your values will help with this. We can set boundaries with others and/or ourselves. Consider your boundaries in several different domains of life:

Physical - (example: It is not ok to become physical during disagreements. If this happens, I will only engage in public settings.)

Relational - (example: I use respectful language with my loved ones and expect the same in return--when I mess up I will circle back and apologize, when others mess up I will let them know and explain my boundary--if they continue I will place limits on the relationship.)

Emotional - (example: Happiness is an inside job--I will not take on the responsibility of making others okay, and likewise, I will not ask others to make me okay.)

Spiritual - (example: I am not comfortable becoming a member of a church where women and people of color are not represented in the leadership.)

Sexual - (example: My partner and I have discussed what is and is not ok for each of us sexually.)

Financial - (example: my partner and I have agreed to not spend over \$50 from our joint account without talking to each other first.)

Occupational - (example: I will not agree to take a job that requires me to be away from home more than one evening per week.)

BOUNDARIES 101

"Knowing what we are to own or take responsibility for gives us freedom. If each of us knows where our yard begins and ends, we are free to do with it what we like."

-Cloud & Townsend, 1999., p. 18

Tips for setting boundaries:

Look at Your History:

The reasons we say yes when the answer is no, are often varied (e.g., under a time crunch, caught off guard, people pleasing, fear of conflict, answering out of habit rather than intentionally considering our options). Some of the reasons that I have struggled in the past with holding my boundaries are:

Struggles with boundaries can often be traced back to our childhoods and the early templates/scripts we learned to survive in the world (e.g., go along to get along, do for others at the expense of yourself, accept any and all behavior rather than be alone, etc.). Are you aware of any of these past templates that make it difficult for you to honor your boundaries in the present?

Before Saying Yes (or giving assent to a situation):

1. Do you feel reluctant/hesitant to say yes, or under compulsion to say yes?
2. Are you saying yes to "please" or because you are afraid of disappointing people, being rejected, thought of as less than, labeled negatively, stirring up conflict? Are you considering saying yes because of how distressing it would feel internally to yourself to say no (e.g., you don't want to feel insignificant, unhelpful, not needed, be forgotten)?
3. Let's imagine or play-out your yes, in your imagined future scenario... Are you exhausted or resentful (exhaustion and resentment can be signs that we need to reexamine our boundaries)?
4. Just because we can, doesn't mean we should. What is the cost of your "yes" (to yourself and others)?
5. What additional support do you need to get clarity around the situation (would it help to run the situation by a trusted friend, etc.)?

BOUNDARIES 101

*Choose discomfort [of setting a boundary] over resentment [later].
- Brene Brown [additions mine]*

Tips for holding boundaries:

You set a boundary!!! Way to go! It's a big deal to shift the way you interact with the world. After we set a boundary we can feel a mix of things... fantastic, scared, hesitant, anxious, relieved, etc.

OTHERS CAN STRUGGLE WITH OUR BOUNDARY SETTING:

Some people will respect our boundaries (hear our "no") while others will push back, pout, become angry, etc. Think about the toddler in the grocery line who regularly gets to pick out some candy... when a parent says no there may be some push back from the toddler and even a meltdown.

WE CAN STRUGGLE WITH OUR OWN BOUNDARY SETTING:

Perhaps you've said no and your boundary is being respected, but you feel overwhelmed and anxious--fears crop up about letting others down, feeling less than, being insignificant, labeled negatively, etc.

SOMETIMES THE STRUGGLE CAN COME FROM BOTH DIRECTIONS:

And then there are those times when it is hard for us to set a boundary because of the reaction of another AND because it's tapping into some core beliefs/pain about who we are if we say no.

Holding our boundaries can be TOUGH! Here are a few tips to manage the uncomfortable space that we can find ourselves in when we have set a boundary and then have to live into a new, possibly uncomfortable experience.

- Know and use your Comfort Wisdom (the activities that pour back into you).
- Call a trusted friend, or therapist who will help you sit with the discomfort.
- Keep a list of the costs and benefits of setting and not setting the boundary.
- Deep breaths - one at a time, slow and steady, and they add up.
- Sleep on it--give yourself some time to feel your feelings and consider the situation again after you've calmed down.
- Everyone is learning... always. Be gracious to yourself and others as you work on this new skill imperfectly.