

August Höglinger



setting  
*boundaries*

for  
ADULTS

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Verlag A. Höglinger

Imprint:

Editor and publisher: August Höglinger

Translation: Mag. Simone Pflieger

Proofreading: Textservice Johann Schnellinger, Schubertstraße 8/3/9, 4020 Linz, Austria

Print: Copyright, Ing. Schürz, Prinz-Eugen-Straße 17, 4020 Linz, Austria

Cover: Projektagentur Weixelbaumer KEG, Landstraße 22, 4020 Linz, Austria

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ISBN 978-3-902410-32-0

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PREFACE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1 WHY SETTING BOUNDARIES?

- 1.1 For whom might this book be useful?
- 1.2 What is a boundary?
- 1.3 Boundaries are part of my life

### 2 HOW DO I IDENTIFY MY BOUNDARIES?

- 2.1 Exercise
- 2.2 Experiences with boundaries
- 2.3 Where are my boundaries – how do I locate them?
- 2.4 Which of my boundaries has already been reached?
- 2.5 How do I identify the boundaries of others?
- 2.6 How do I react in case of boundary violation and invasion?
- 2.7 What is the difference between boundary violation and invasion?
- 2.8 How do I cross a border appropriately if I want to or have to?

### 3 HOW DO I DEFEND MY BOUNDARIES?

- 3.1 How do I make sure that others comply with my boundaries?
- 3.2 Set boundaries lovingly and say NO – how do I do that?
- 3.3 A large territory is hard to defend
- 3.4 What can you do with people who barely accept boundaries?
- 3.5 Advice when criticising

- 3.6 Warnings: yellow – red
- 3.7 Punishment or consequences?
- 3.8 How do consequence and tolerance get along?
- 3.9 Boundary violations demand adjustment

#### 4 SET AND AGREE UPON BOUNDARIES

- 4.1 Agree upon one-time and permanent boundaries
- 4.2 Invite somebody across the boundary
- 4.3 YES and NO –
  - two keywords when setting boundaries
- 4.4 Little exercises make perfect

#### 5 RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY AND BOUNDARIES

- 5.1 My ability to say YES/NO is an indicator for my capability of having a relationship
- 5.2 Boundaries are necessary for a relationship
- 5.3 Male and female behaviour in case of boundary violations

#### 6 SETTING BOUNDARIES IN A COMPANY

- 6.1 Orders in the company
- 6.2 Divide tasks in the territory
- 6.3 Aspects and recommendations for executives
- 6.4 Aspects and recommendations for employees
- 6.5 Sometimes we have to tear down boundaries and build them anew

#### 7 I WANT TO START SETTING BOUNDARIES AGAIN

#### TABLE OF STORIES

#### REFERENCES

# PREFACE

I realised that the central meaning regarding one's quality of life is the reasonable use of boundaries. One of the main points in my personal development is to prevent myself from attacks and to identify my boundaries, in order to define them clearly. When I discovered how much people annoy me because they tell me what I "have to do", ask me "Why didn't you?" and I realised a tendency towards violence, I started to deal with the topic on a professional level. Topics such as distance and closeness, contact, conflict, relationship, falling in love versus being in love are related to boundaries.

One who does not know how to deal with internal and external boundaries, causes harm to himself and others!

One who accepts that his boundaries are being crossed constantly, tries to escape or falls ill. One who does not accept other people's boundaries and crosses them, acts violently. If we paid closer attention to our active and passive boundaries, there would be greater harmony in families, relationships, between groups, regions, religions and nations.

This book with its examples taken from different areas of life should make the reader more sensitive and help him.

*Alfred Preuß*

# INTRODUCTION

HAPPINESS MEANS  
TO KNOW AND LOVE  
ONE'S BOUNDARIES.

Romain Rolland

## Set boundaries for adults

The central aim of this book is to deal with the issues of setting boundaries and territorial borders regarding private as well as professional areas of life.

Today, one can find several books on how to set boundaries for our children. However, only a few deal with the subject of setting boundaries for adults. A selection of these will be provided at the end of this book.

How did I get in touch with the topic?

Alfred Preuß, who wrote the preface to this book, confronted me in a seminar with the task to “set boundaries”. This rather simple exercise had a great impact: I discovered the elementary meaning behind the terms “boundaries” and “territories” and I realised that I received a key for understanding situations in life in different ways than before. I started to be aware of the amount and types of boundaries, which I had not noticed up to this point. Furthermore, I became more

sensitised towards the invasion of boundaries that I committed, inflicted or allowed.

The best teacher for setting boundaries was my wife. She always knew how to set boundaries because of her family. It often was difficult for my wife to live with a person like me, who does not know, articulate and defend his own boundaries.

During the first couple of years I tended to be hurt when having a fight but I didn't know why. I could not define what bothered me. Only through the way she treated me and the consequences arising for myself I came to understand the invasion of boundaries and territorial claims on both parts and how to deal with them. It took me years until I was able to thank my wife for setting boundaries for me and for crossing them. With the benefit of taking a second glance on these situations, I considered it a real blessing.

Upon working as a coach and consultant, I have a professional approach towards the topic: After having guided seminars on time management for several years, I visited former attendants. Even though I observed that they had put many of my advices into practice, they all seemed to have a common problem. As they had gained time, they were still working as much as before. They were all lacking the ability to say NO and to set boundaries. Thus, I focused in my book "Zeit haben heißt NEIN sagen" exclusively on this aspect. One who cannot or does not want to say NO, will not be able to cope with his time management and self-management.

In the course of my last ten years guiding seminars and working as a consultant, I have realised how essential the topic of boundaries and territories is for the collaboration in companies. Trainings, coachings and cloisters have showed how little attention is being paid to these key concepts. Hence, it has been observed that frustration and conflicts often arise from disregarding them.

## Thanks

I want to thank my friend Mag. Stefan Manigatterer for writing down my stories and for adding proverbs and additional statements.

Furthermore, I want to thank all the people that are included in this book because of sharing their personal stories with me. Thanks to my wife and my family for supporting me and for giving me all the time I have needed in order to finish this book.

Also, I want to thank all the people who proofread the manuscript and contributed new ideas regarding the contents as well as the creative aspect of this book.

## Male/female form of address in the text

Due to reasons of simplicity and prevalence, I use exclusively the male form of address to represent both sexes. I thank both my male and female readers for their understanding.

# 1 WHY SETTING BOUNDARIES?

## 1.1 For whom might this book be useful?

This book should help readers who do not feel comfortable when having to set boundaries and say NO. Others might want to defend themselves successfully against the invasion of their boundaries or put an end to it.

Furthermore, the book might be interesting for people who have little experience with boundaries, setting boundaries or their own behaviour in relation to boundaries towards themselves as well as others. As people have started to focus on performance and power, they do not know or feel when their own body is setting a boundary. Especially when being responsible of leading a company, one needs to maintain boundaries and territories for one's own sake. There will be provided several examples within this book. Eventually, the book is for everybody who wants to change his personality and for those who have already learned how to set boundaries but want to do it more lovingly in the future.

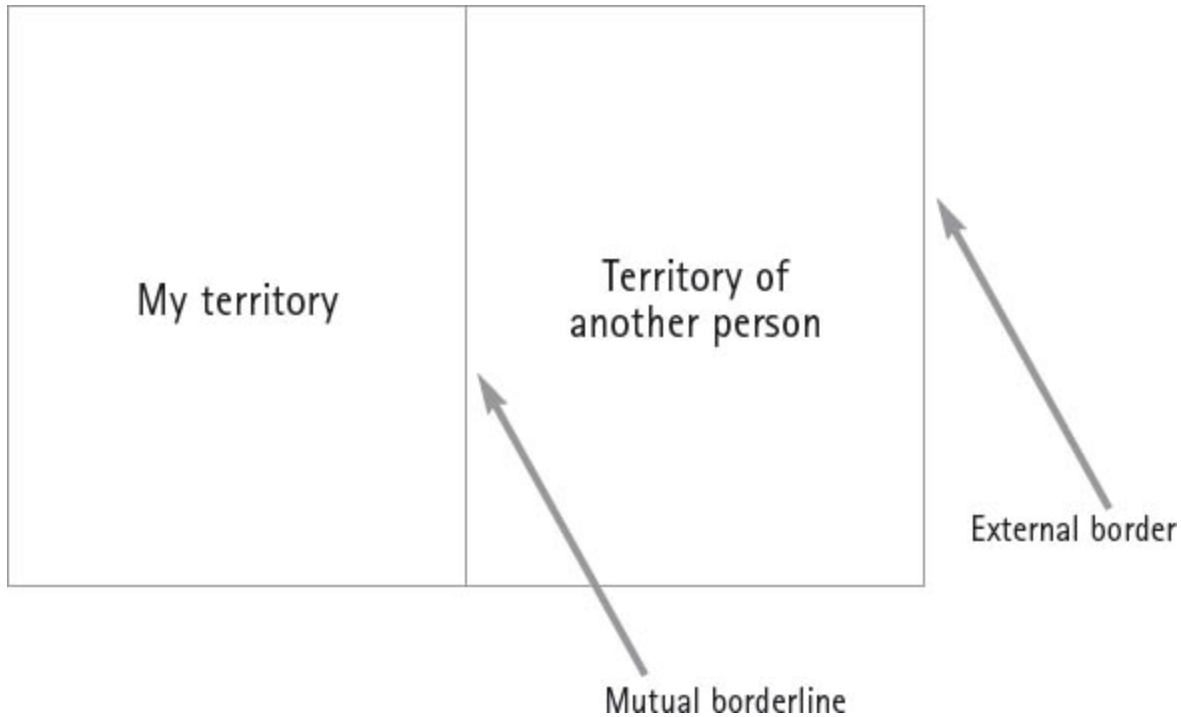
## 1.2 What is a boundary?

I intentionally refrain from the attempt of offering a scientific definition in this chapter. I trust in the reader's ability to being able to define the term after having finished the book.

What is most important is to know the borders of the territory that I have or need to live pleased with myself and the others. Thus, I need to know the territories and boundaries others demand as well. In

general, the periphery of a territory marks its border. Where two or more people live or work together in a big territory, borders change into mutual borderlines.

Territories and boundaries:



The definition of territorial space and the borderlines are essential for cohabitation, as claims for territory and boundaries are different for everybody. For instance, some people need strictly defined borderlines and rules whereas others tend to regularise as little as possible.

Territorial space and borderlines depend very much on the topic, the person and the general framework. According to the situation, each person might respond differently as usually. For example, colleagues often try to seize a beneficial opportunity to propose an idea to the boss.

The claim for a certain territory and borderlines might change in the course of time. What was important before is not so significant any more. Hence, claiming territories and drawing borders needs to be defined according to one's needs.

### 1.3 Boundaries are part of my life

Boundaries are made to protect the life and interests of each individual and each group of people by acknowledging that life itself – especially organic life – possesses and claims local, temporal and emotional boundaries.

A relationship between two people might not survive without any defined frame, space and time to live within.

Each organism tries to separate itself from its environment, starting with a single body cell: it possesses a semipermeable membrane to do so. Each cell distinguishes what can pass through the membrane and what leaves the cell again. It assesses what is beneficial for its development and survival. Only because of the feeling of security due to this membrane a living organism is being able to cooperate with others, without eating each other or merging.

Regarding human beings, our outer membrane is our skin. The “inner” one exists because of our emotional sensations. It is used to set boundaries towards others and to determine what we want to absorb and how far we allow others to come nearer.

Looking at the cohabitation with others, it becomes quite obvious that we are connected with nature: like an animal that defends its territory or a leader its position in the group, humans tend to display similar behaviour regarding territorial space, power and status.

Just think about how you feel when you are waiting in line and somebody pushes himself forward. You might probably know how to anticipate that in order to show him the end of the line.

Another possibility might be that your new boss is a young manager who just graduated from university. He barely has any experience in your sector but wants to tell you and your experienced colleagues how to improve your work. How would you and your colleagues react? Are you going to accept the instructions? As a matter of fact,

he is your boss. Accordingly, you have to follow his instructions. However, the situation might result in a rather unpleasant atmosphere: Not with me! He needs to earn his privileges first!

We cannot deny our heritage. If we want to get along, we need to take our “animal” roots seriously. They cannot be denied through intellectual capacity. Thus, we need to take them into consideration. What happens if we cross somebody’s boundaries? Invasion! This step is assumed to be a disdain and an attack on the other’s territorial space. The other party might fight for his rights and start a counterattack. In other words: war! The linguistic root of the word “war” means that a person attempts to achieve something through endeavour and fight.

Crossing the boundaries of other people is not so different. If we invade their boundaries and territories, they might fight back: a battle arises!

Living in peace is for most people an important goal in life. This is possible when others respect the right to set boundaries, the interests and dignity of oneself.

Regarding *political areas*, boundaries, interests and territorial claims are often regulated through national and international declarations. The path in order to reach such acknowledgments can be rather exhausting. Long-term negotiations, countless meetings and diplomatic skills are required. One is confronted with an unmanageable amount of legal laws within a state, which should guarantee a pleasant living together among its citizens. The efforts of political activists in federation, states and communities are not so very different from establishing rules for boundary and territorial space.

How about the private and professional area? When quarrelling with a neighbour or claiming a refund for special damage of a product, these situations, as well as similar ones, are being regulated by laws. For instance, employment laws have been created in the professional area. However, many situations do not have such

general rules, resulting in irritation, arguments and even battles. Accordingly, this book is supposed to address these situations:

- What are boundaries and typical invasions of boundaries in everyday life?
- How should I react in case of an invasion of my boundaries?
- How can I set boundaries, defend them and maintain my arrangements?