

Embodied Consent and Rejection-for-Connection as Boundary Practices

with monarda thrasher

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Introductions

Take two minutes to check in with the person next to you.

Who are you?

Where do you come from? Who do you come from?

Do you know the ancestral people who stewarded the land you call home?

What do you feel in your body?

What are some sensations you can name: smell, sound, vision, taste, skin contact?

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What are Boundaries?

- Delineations of what are our responsibilities and what are not
- Edges that tell us what is comfortable and what is not
- What's OK and what's not OK
- May be renegotiated at any time

Examples

- At work I am only responsible for advocating for myself. I can advocate for others if I choose to.
- Exploring my past trauma is uncomfortable, I get to choose how and when and with whom I do that, and that can change.
- It is OK for my kids to swear around themselves, it is not OK for them to swear around adults

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What is "Boundary Practice"?

An intentional way of learning about, engaging with and exploring boundaries.

Examples:

- Asking boundaries what they are protecting.
- Expressing boundaries to self and others in clear and loving ways.
- Noticing when boundaries shift without conscious intention and exploring.
- Connecting boundaries with historical trauma of self, land and ancestors.
- Envisioning a bubble or aura around your body and expressing what can and cannot come in.
- Being fully present with your body and your energy field (aura).

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Emotion vs. Sensation

An **emotion** is a mental reaction to something happening in our body, environment, world. It may be connected with a psychological or behavioral shift, such as bringing up thoughts about self or others or changing the way someone related with another person.

A **sensation** is the stimulation of sensory receptors in the body, including ears, eyes, nose, tongue, skin, and other part of the nervous system. Stimulation occurs from changes in the environment(s).

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Emotions and **sensations** exist in the body, sometimes together, sometimes separately.

When understanding trauma and triggers, being able to differentiate between emotion and sensation is a helpful tool to get to know how our bodies work and to be able to intervene earlier in a trauma cycle to change the outcome.

Understanding the relationship between emotions and sensations can help us with skillful practices like acceptance, surrender, grace, etc.

As we move through embodiment practices, I invite you to notice both sensations and emotions.

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Survivors and Post Traumatic Stress

People who have lived through traumatic experiences.

People who cope with difficult experiences in their life.

Many if not all survivors have untreated, undiagnosed or misdiagnosed cPTSS and/or PTSS.

cPTSS and PTSS are sets of neurological symptoms that presents socially, emotionally, physiologically and mentally. cPTSS and PTSS are disabilities.

Many people with cPTSS have other disabilities.

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Working with Survivors

We don't treat survivors like they are disabled, we believe that everyone, no matter what their state of being, deserves an approach that is unique to them.

Practice Consent:

Ask them about their access needs. This can include sensory needs, social needs, spiritual needs, emotional needs, etc.

Ask them what pronouns and nouns they use and feel seen and safe with.

Ask survivors if there are specific ways of working with them, talking with them that helps.

Ask them before you talk about things that could be triggering, if you can ask about it.

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Why Consent with Survivors?

Using consent with Survivors levels the interaction. People without trauma get triggered less and have better health outcomes. Giving survivors consent allows us to have more control over how we relate with our trauma. Consent allows us to have control over how we relate with humans and relationships, as unsecure relationships are the source of cPTSS. It also helps us to know who is willing to see us as we want and need to be seen, and who we can trust.

Explicit consent helps survivors remember and know where their physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries are.

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What is Consent

When one person gives permission to another person to do something related to them.

Examples:

"Can I give you a hug?"

"Can I ask you about your weekend with your mom?"

"Can I call you 'sister'?"

"Can I give you some feedback about something you told me the other day?"

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What is embodiment?

Embodiment is the practice and process of getting to know the body. Moment to moment we practice awareness of the sensations of the body and allow the body to be how it is. It is similar to and complimentary to mindfulness, in that mindfulness is cultivating awareness of the mind.

There are many embodiment practices to choose from.

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Somatic Abolitionism

Somatic Abolitionism is living, embodied anti-racist practice and cultural building —a way of being in the world. It is a return to the age-old wisdom of human bodies respecting, honoring, and resonating with other human bodies

-Resemaa Manakem

Somatic abolitionism invites us to understand that we live in a culture in which bodies have different value, based on race, religion, gender, class, ability, sexual orientation, etc. We are invited to understand to somatic aspects of systems of oppression, grieve the traumas and build culture that is libeatory.

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What is embodied consent?

Embodied Consent is a practice of listening to the body's wisdom when asked for consent. In the practice, we notice if there is resistance in the body, name any resistance as a boundary and decide whether or not we are ready to test that boundary.

Embodied consent allows us to take the process of consent as slow as we need to.

1. Notice it
2. Name it
3. Relate with it
4. Decide how to engage or test it.

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Practice

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What came up for you?
What did you feel in your body?

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Rejection for Connection

Or saying "no" as "yes"

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What can happen when a survivor experiences rejection?

Many survivors are not taught skillful attachment, meaning that as adults we are unsure of how to form attachments that bring us joy and pleasure without bringing us unbearable pain and suffering.

We may experience a "no" or a rejection as a total loss of relationship. "Are they saying 'no' to me, to connection with me or to this specific connection with me?"

This can leave us unsure about what the relationship means and how to move forward, and many of us do not have coping strategies to address how we feel.

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What is missing in "no"?

When someone says "no" to connection, connection is missing and it may end the conversation.

"Hey do you want to go to the movies this afternoon?"

"No, I don't like movies." Or "No, I'm busy this afternoon." Or "No, I am broke."

End scene

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How to turn "no" into a "yes" for connection?

Rejection for connection turns a "no" for one thing into a "yes" for another.

"Hey do you want to go to the movies this afternoon?"

"I can't, I'm busy, but I'd like to go another time, how about tomorrow?"

Or "No, I don't like movie theaters, can we go for a walk, instead?"

Or "No, I'm broke right now, wanna watch a movie at my place?"

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Practice

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RfC Role Play 1

For trauma survivors, this practice can be deepened. Offering a survivor more information helps us to be reminded about our place in the relationship and in the world.

Role Play 1: Peer Specialist speaking to Peer via text
"Hey, something came up with my kids and I need to cancel our session."

"Hey, how are things in your world? I have to change the time of our session because something came up with my kids. I care about you and I want to make sure we can reschedule."

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RfC Role Play 2:

Peer: Something came up for me today and I'm really struggling. Are you available to check in today?
Certified Peer: Hey I'm not available today, I'm available tomorrow. I hope that works out for you.

Peer: Something came up for me today and I'm really struggling. Are you available to check in today?
Certified Peer: Hey there, I really appreciate you for reaching out. I am not available to check in today, but I can check in tomorrow. Can you tell someone else who you can reach out to today if you need support? (might ask "are you safe?")

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What did you feel in your body?
What came up for you?
Any stories or memories?

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Please reach out with questions and feedback.
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