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## HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY GUIDELINES FOR SELF CARE

Many people aren't aware of the relationship between the healthy boundaries we need in life and our experiences of food, body image, emotional eating, or other compulsive activities.

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It can appear that healthy boundaries are just for our interpersonal relationships. Yet, they also influence our relationship with ourselves, food, and our bodies.

You might ask, how does this influence our relationship with food? Aren't we in charge of what we do and don't put into our mouths?

Aren't we deciding what we do and don't do with our exercise?

If we look closely, we may discover that a relationship does exist between how we experience ourselves in our relationships and what we then do with food and our bodies.



## Understanding Our Inbuilt Needs



**We all long to be seen, understood, assured, and kindly acknowledged.**

The painful experiences of not being seen or of feeling misunderstood must be navigated in relationship with others. Yet, if there isn't an "other" there for us, or we don't feel safe approaching an "other", we may seek comfort in food instead. (ie. Ben + Jerry and Keebler's "elves" are still there for us!)

**None of us longs to feel out of control with food nor our bodies nor our emotions.**

Nor our thoughts or anxieties. These physiological states do seem to be calmed down by food (even though food is also part of what we're regretting, even hating). We can mistake this as only our internal issue. Yet, even our anxieties were formed in relationship and are healed in relationship.



**Some of us feel more “in control” when we’re “in control” of food.**

And we may tolerate life’s uncertainties (including in relationships) better from this place. Yet this can become a fragile way to live, since relationships are not meant for “control”.

**We’re wired to care about the needs of others** before our own (it’s truly in your wiring!). Yet, when we’re out of balance, we can take this in-built inclination past its intended neurological map and leave us feeling depleted, burned out, and unseen. Food does seem to help. Temporarily.

# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY



## GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY

### SELF-AWARENESS:

- **Recognize Boundaries are a part of life.**
  - All life includes boundaries. Biological life. Relational life. Professional life. All life.
  - Observe what happens when boundaries are clear:  
Less mess.
  - Observe what happens when boundaries are Unclear:  
More mess.

# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY



- **Your Body has internal boundaries.**
  - Your body intelligence has multitudes of collaborating systems, all of which have their membranes.
  - Listen more often to your body intelligence. Through yoga, you can discover it working on your behalf.
- **Boundaries are an expression of care and respect.**
  - Transform your view that boundaries are not “against others”. Rather, boundaries are “towards self” - directed toward and created for the care of one’s self, to better participate in relationships.
  - Become aware of any inner “static” you feel when you want to express your Healthy Boundaries and you sense the reaction of others. This apprehension is an important signal. The first step in shifting this is awareness that it happens.

# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY



## SELF-CARE ACTIONS:

- **Boundaries for your Personal Buoyancy:** Maintaining baseline health.
  - Drink enough water to hydrate.
  - Create and stick to a nourishing bedtime routine (regularly, not just at peak stress times, but with more focus during peak times).
  - Don't postpone the need to pee (your bladder affects your pelvic floor, your pelvic floor affects your brain which influences your mental clarity).
  - Stay nourished. Eat enough protein to maintain your balanced blood sugar. Limit becoming "over-hungry" which tempts you to overindulge or derail your loyalty to your recovery.
  - Get into nature to soak in the wisdom of life around and within you.
  - Raise your heartrate to clear your mind.

# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY

- **Boundaries as Mindful Eating:**

- Eat seasonal foods that are filled with vitality and color. (Winter knows it isn't spring; and summer doesn't try to be the season of autumn.) Nature, too, has her rhythms and boundaries. She won't produce blueberries for you in January in Alaska.
  - Eat in alignment with nature.
  - Recognize food as nature. Remember the larger natural world that is growing the foods with which you are nourishing yourself.
- Do not skip a meal to care for others. Arrange your schedule to protect YOU having a meal time that is sane, stable, and satiating for YOU. If you can only swing this once a day, make it really matter.
  - Ayurveda says make lunch your main meal in the day.
  - Create a beautiful environment in which to eat. (Do not eat this meal at your desk nor while driving - those are not healthy boundaries.) Include a certain placemat, a candle, a particular mug or bowl that you enjoy holding.



# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY

- Give yourself complete permission to enjoy a food.
  - Eat slowly and be deliberate about tasting, savoring, and remembering that you are eating it.
  - Allow your body the time to recognize it is being nourished, not rushed or forgotten.
- Assure yourself that you are not going to “get in trouble” for eating – that you won’t let your “indulgence-punishment” or “reward-deprivation” thinking take over.
  - When you are complete with the food, enjoy another few moments of savoring – and acknowledging that you are doing this thoughtfully, purposely, and with your best interest in mind.



# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY



- **Boundaries for Deep Rest: Healthy “Calendaring”**
  - Mark healthy bedtimes on your calendar with foresight about how demanding a day will be or what the next day will require of you.
  - Mark healthy wake-up times on your calendar, allowing for enough time for yoga, meditation or pranayama practices before working, parenting, or schooling.
  - Mark out the white space that you will need to maintain your well-being
    - o ie. a 20-minute break for a restorative yoga pose in the afternoon or a 40-minute walk outdoors.
  - Mark the days that you will request relief from being on call for everyone else, including family members or your job.

# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY



- **Personal Buoyancy when caring for others:**

- Do not tend to responsibilities involving the care of others with low blood sugar, too hungry, or too tired.
  - If you must eat before tending to life's responsibilities, do so.
  - If you need a 15-minute time out, gift this to yourself. It matters greatly
- In yoga, we do what's called a savasana, a physically and mentally restorative practice:
  - Lie on your back with your legs elevated on a chair, your sofa, or ottoman.
  - Dim the lights and turn off the distractions.
  - Put your attention on your breath.
  - Give yourself permission to simply be for 15-minutes.

# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY

- Choose an amount of time that you feel you can commit to someone else and not lose your balance.
  - How long can you stay at the care center, the hospital, the school event, the family event?). This should also respect your sleep needs: your bedtime and wake up time commitments as above.
- Create and consistently establish that which you know YOU CAN DO, and that which you know YOU CAN NO LONGER DO in dynamics that are depleting you.
  - Reflect on this for your self-respect and self-advocacy.
  - Learn to compassionately say what your Boundary is and consider expressing how it supports your self-care or your capacity to continue caring for others without depleting you.
  - When necessary, say What You Can't Do, firmly, but without anger or resentment.
  - Be prepared to feel uneasy or uncertain, yet not to collapse inwardly.

# GUIDELINES for HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, HEALTHY BODY



- **Be Kind to Yourself:** These guidelines are not an exercise in perfection. They are skills that take time to develop, and they begin with mindful behavior. Being mindful enough to recognize in the moment that you are doing a behavior you don't want to do is a victory. Don't beat yourself up. Celebrate yourself for recognizing your behavior in the moment. Give yourself permission to then choose a new behavior, create a healthy boundary, and celebrate that choice.
- **Plan Yoga Interventions:**
  - A few times during the day give yourself a time out: mindfulness tools, breathing interventions, yoga exercises that can be done in 2-3 minutes.
  - In **Hunger, Hope & Healing**, you can see many yoga exercises that you may find helpful for a quick break.

## ABOUT HUNGER, HOPE & HEALING

If you are a woman who has struggled with food and your body, and you want to have more power over food than it has over you, this program is for you.

If you are a woman who has struggled with food and your body, and you want to be free from life-deadening diets and rigid thinking, this program is for you.

If you are a woman who has struggled with food and your body, and you want to reclaim your vibrancy and health, this program is for you.

If you are a woman who has struggled with food and your body, and you want to live honestly, free from shame and self-hatred, with the vitality you know is in you, this program is for you.

To learn more about Hunger, Hope & Healing, visit [hungerhopeandhealing.com](http://hungerhopeandhealing.com).

# HUNGER, HOPE & HEALING FOUNDER & DIRECTOR



*Sarahjoy Marsh*

## ***Transformation Catalyst***

Sarahjoy Marsh, MA, E-RYT-500 yoga teacher, therapist and author, is a vibrant, compassionate catalyst for transformation to those that suffer from addictions – in particular disordered eating patterns/emotional eating.

The combination of her knowledge of powerful yoga and mindfulness tools, her ability to identify when a conditioned mind crowds out clear thinking and to inspire the courage to bring insight into action, her perspective on the terrain of the stages of recovery and the tools to use along the way to recovery make her methodology (outlined in her book *Hunger, Hope & Healing*) a comprehensive and effective healing modality

Her 28 + year training and facilitation background includes transpersonal counseling, art therapy, and community mental health, the psychology of yoga, Ayurveda, and rehabilitative yoga