

Healthy Relationships and Boundaries

A Framework for Emotional Intelligence



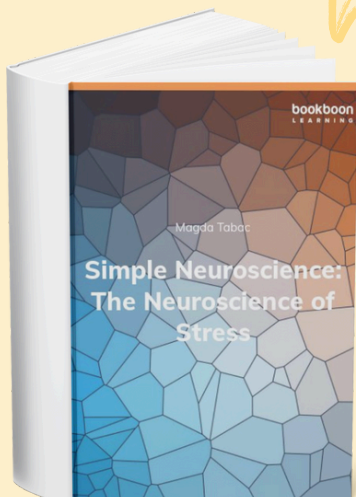
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About Me

My Why

I am passionate about helping people enhance their lives by fostering self-awareness, improving communication skills, and mastering stress management.

My mission is to empower individuals to unlock their potential and lead more balanced, fulfilling lives.



Published Author

I am the author of Simple Neuroscience: The Neuroscience of Stress, published on BookBoon. This book explores practical strategies to understand and manage stress using insights from neuroscience. You can access it [here](#).

My Professional Journey

With over 12 years of experience in corporate roles, I've developed a deep understanding of both the challenges and opportunities people face in high-pressure environments.

My career highlights include:

- Strategy Consultant
- Strategy and Planning Analyst/Manager
- Project Manager
- Team Manager
- Volunteer Trainer (6 years)

Since 2018, I have started my career as a trainer, delivering impactful training sessions to thousands of individuals on four continents.

Certifications & Expertise

To bring the best tools and practices to my clients, I've earned several leading certifications in the fields of neuroscience, communication, and emotional intelligence, including:

- Emotional Assertiveness
- NeuroMindfulness© Coach Certification – Master Practitioner Level
- Applied Neuroscience Certification – The Neuroscience Academy
- Process Communication Model® (PCM)

Healthy Relationships and Boundaries

A Framework for Emotional Intelligence

Relationships form the cornerstone of our human experience, yet many of us never receive formal guidance on how to build and maintain healthy connections.

This framework, which I explored for the first time as part of my **Trainer Certification for the Emotional Assertiveness Model**, explores the essential elements of healthy relationships through the lens of boundaries, responsibility, and conscious agreements.

And, I must say, it was a big Aha! moment for me.

Therefore, I hope you will find it as useful as I did! 😊

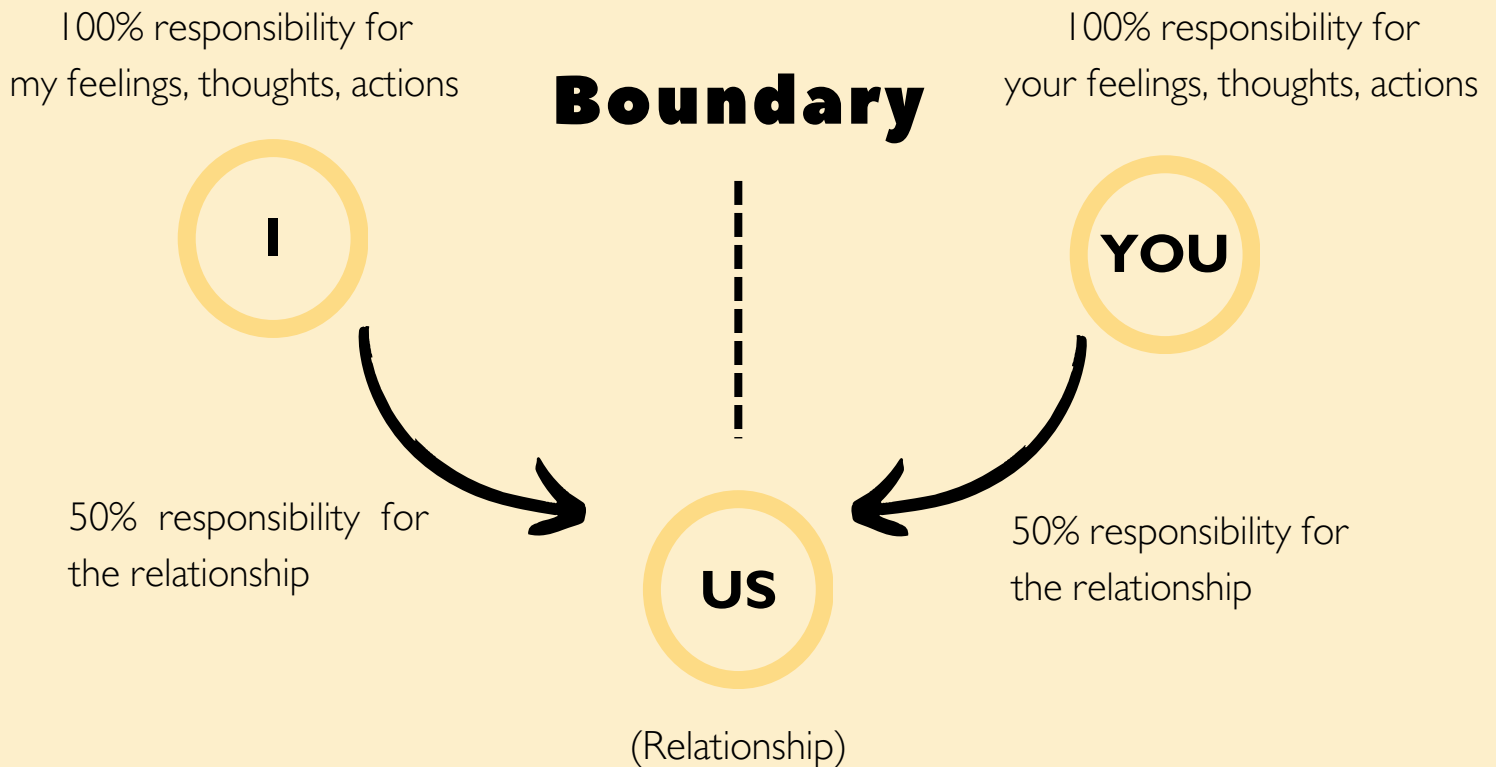
A healthy relationship isn't about two people merging into one unit, losing their individual identities in the process – though, I found this to be the case in some teams I experienced during my 'corporate life' or with some of the couples I've met during my life.

Rather, a healthy relationship, it's about two complete individuals choosing to create something valuable together while maintaining their distinct selves.

We call this something **a relationship**.

This guide will help you understand the architecture of healthy relationships and provide practical ways to implement some helpful principles in your life to enhance the quality of your relationships.

The Three-Entity Model of Relationships



When we look at the relationship diagram, we see three distinct entities:

- "I" (you as an individual)
- "You" (the other person)
- "Us" (the relationship itself)

This three-entity model represents a fundamental truth about healthy relationships: a relationship is not just the blending of two people but the creation of a third entity that exists between and because of them: **the relationship.**

Understanding Boundaries

The *boundary line* in the diagram represents the crucial separation between individuals. This separation isn't about emotional distance but about psychological integrity. In healthy relationships, boundaries serve multiple functions:

1. *They define where one person ends and another begins*
2. *They protect individual identity and autonomy*
3. *They create safety and trust*
4. *They establish clear responsibilities*

Without boundaries, relationships become symbiotic or co-dependent. When boundaries are too rigid, intimacy becomes degraded, the less clarity about boundaries, the greater the interpersonal disruption. The sweet spot lies in having flexible (negotiable and respectful) yet clear boundaries that allow for both connection and individual growth.

The Responsibility Framework

100% Responsibility for Self

In the diagram, each person takes 100% responsibility for their own:

Thoughts

Feelings

Actions

Choices

This means recognizing that while others may influence our emotional states, we ultimately own our responses.

Taking full responsibility for yourself means:

Not blaming others for your emotions

Not expecting others to read your mind

Not believing that you can read the minds of others

Not trying to control others' feelings or behaviours

Being accountable for your choices and their consequences

Understanding your emotional state and acting according to the needs associated to each emotion experienced, for win-win relationships

When both parties practice this level of self-responsibility, the relationship becomes a space of mutual respect rather than mutual blame.

50% Responsibility for the Relationship

The diagram shows that each person takes 50% responsibility for the relationship itself.

This shared responsibility means:

Both parties have equal investment in the relationship's health

Both contribute to solving problems and celebrating successes

Both have a voice in decisions that affect the relationship

Neither person carries the entire burden of maintaining the connection

This balanced approach prevents the common dynamic where one person becomes the "relationship caretaker" while the other remains passive.

The Contractual Nature **of Healthy Relationships**

Healthy relationships are fundamentally contractual. This doesn't mean cold or businesslike, but rather intentional and agreement-based. The "Us" entity in the diagram represents this relational contract.

The Power of Explicit Agreements

Many relationship challenges (at work or at home) stem from implicit assumptions rather than explicit agreements. For example, some that I've met during my years of corporate work or in my personal life:

- Taking for granted shared definitions of respect, support, or commitment (in a team or in a couples' relationship or a friendship), whilst never openly checking mutual agreement
- Assuming my colleague will know exactly what I need them to include in a report I ask of them, without having clearly expressed my wants and expectations. And then, when they don't meet my unspoken expectations, I complain
- Assuming my line-manager, colleague or partner knows what I'm thinking, feeling, wanting, without me stating it
- Assuming the Job Description contains all my task and responsibilities or, vice-versa; my line-manager assuming the Job Description is just a guide, with many other responsibilities being self-implied (but not clearly stated)
- Assuming rather than discussing expectations around fidelity
- Presuming shared goals about career, family, or lifestyle

When we make these aspects explicit through conversation and agreement, we create clarity and prevent unnecessary hurt and disappointment. It's like setting the goals and objectives for the relationship.

Creating Relationship Contracts

A relationship contract isn't usually a written document (though it can be), but rather a mutual understanding about:



These agreements aren't carved in stone. Healthy relationships revisit and revise their contracts as individuals grow and circumstances change.

Common *Myths* **vs.** *Couples' Relationship Realities*

Myth:

"My Better Half" or "Two Halves Make a Whole"

Reality: Two whole people make a relationship. You don't complete each other – this would imply that one was not complete to begin with. We were not two half-humans coming in a relationship, we were two separate and complete individuals. So, we don't complete each other, we complement each other.

Myth:

Love Means Always Agreeing

Reality: Healthy relationships make space for differences and respectful disagreement. Always agreeing leads to unhappiness, lack of assertiveness and to a build-up of frustration because one's needs and wants are not spoken or are not heard.

Myth:

Love Shouldn't Need Boundaries

Reality: Boundaries are the foundation of respect and trust in relationships. We are two different individuals with different needs, emotions, ideas, thoughts, etc. It is healthy to keep this separation: I am always me and you are always you and we don't mix or blur together to form an odd, undefined thing. It is the acts of sharing, negotiating and accepting that builds and strengthened relationship.

Myth:

In Perfect Relationships, Partners Always Know What the Other Needs

Reality: Clear communication about needs and expectations is essential in all relationships. We are not the other person and, no matter how much we'd want, we cannot know what the other thinks or wants. We need to clearly state what we need and the other person needs to do the same. We must listen to each other.

Implementing *Healthy Boundaries* in Practice

Self-Assessment Questions

Before establishing boundaries with others, ask yourself:

What are my non-negotiable needs in this relationship (work or personal)?

Where have I felt uncomfortable or resentful in past relationships/jobs/teams?

In what areas am I prone to taking too much responsibility for others?

Where might I be avoiding responsibility for myself?

Write your answers!

Communication Tools for Setting Boundaries

Effective boundary-setting relies on clear communication:

1. Use **"I" statements**: "I feel overwhelmed when..." rather than "You always make me feel..."
2. **Be specific**: "I need at least two day's time for this kind of reports and it needs to be cleared with my line-manager", rather than "I need advance notice for this report" or "I need one evening to myself each week" rather than "I need more space"
3. **Focus on your needs rather than their behaviours**: "I need clear instructions for this report" rather than "You are hectic!", or "I need honesty in our relationship" rather than "You need to stop lying"
4. **Establish consequences**: "If this boundary/request continues to be crossed, I will manage this by..."

Write your own examples!

Respecting Others' Boundaries

Boundary respect goes both ways:

- *Ask rather than assume what others are comfortable with*
- *Take "no" gracefully without trying to persuade or offer guilt*
- *Notice non-verbal cues that might signal discomfort*
- *Regularly check in about comfort levels and needs*

The Evolution of *Healthy Relationships*

**1. Periodically revisit
agreements and boundaries**

**2. Create space for
both parties to evolve**



**Healthy
relationships**

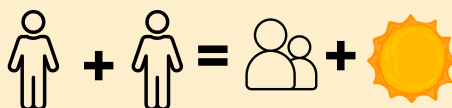
**4. Deepen in trust as boundaries
are respected over time**

**3. Adjust to changing
circumstances and life stages**

*Relationships aren't static:
they grow and change as do individuals.*

A healthy relationship is fundamentally about **two individuals choosing to create something meaningful together while maintaining their identities.** By understanding the three-entity model, embracing full self-responsibility while sharing relationship responsibility, and approaching relationships as being founded upon conscious agreements, we build connections that enhance rather than diminish our individual selves. At work or at home.

The equation is simple but profound: **1 + 1 = 2 + 1.**



Two whole individuals plus one healthy relationship.

When we embrace this framework, our relationships become sources of growth, joy, and fulfillment rather than dependency, resentment, and loss of self.

Connect with me

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