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## Self-Healing For People Who Enjoy Helping Themselves November 2005

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### IN THIS ISSUE — BOUNDARIES

HI EVERYBODY!

I hope you've been able to get out and enjoy the fall weather and colors. Now that the winter holidays are fast approaching, it's important to spend at least some time each day focusing on self-care. When you take care of yourself, everyone around you benefits.

Many of you have expressed concerns about the lack of sunlight and its effect on mood. For those of you who are affected by the lack of light as the season changes, I have contacted a company that makes Full Spectrum Light Boxes. Research has shown that light boxes are often effective for treating winter blues, Seasonal Affective Disorder, and even major depression. After talking at length with the president of the company, I have been able to arrange a 10% discount on their light boxes for anyone who mentions my name when ordering. You may contact Light for Health at (800) 468-1104 or visit their web site at [www.lightforhealth.com](http://www.lightforhealth.com). Please be aware that I don't profit in any way from the sale of these light boxes.

One current view of Seasonal Affective Disorder is that it is caused by an accumulation of negative experiences that occurred during the darker months of the year or that occurred in actual darkness. During the late fall and winter when there is less natural light, people begin to subconsciously associate increased darkness with those negative experiences. The form of light therapy that I do in my office is very effective at treating Seasonal Affective Disorder, because it combines light stimulation with talking about negative experiences associated with darkness. In this way, the light therapy neutralizes the negative causal experiences directly.

My client, P. has kindly given me permission to share her experience with overcoming Seasonal Affective Disorder using this form of light therapy. For years she had noticed that she would become moderately depressed at the end of each October when Daylight Savings Time ended. When we explored what life events might have occurred during the darker months of the year, she told me that one of her favorite uncles had died in early November when she was a child. During previous sessions, she had also told me that sexual abuse was part of her background. When I asked her what time of year these events had occurred, she revealed that they had mostly occurred at night during the winter months. Over the course of several sessions, we discussed these events while she sat in front of the light therapy device that I use during counseling. Along with the light stimulation and discussion, I also used several emotional healing techniques for grieving and trauma. Once we treated these losses and traumas, her depression lifted, and the pattern of experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder every year was alleviated.

If you or someone you know experiences Seasonal Affective Disorder or depression, please call me at (630) 960-2887 or email me at [dlippmann@att.net](mailto:dlippmann@att.net).

The newsletter topic for this month, written by my colleague, Tony, focuses on **Boundaries**. It highlights the importance of creating strong boundaries for ourselves and not violating the boundaries of others.

In the meantime, **remember to take care of yourself**. If you are experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression in anticipation of the winter months, don't waste precious time suffering. Invest in your emotional well-being and give me a call.

## BOUNDARIES

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**WHAT ARE BOUNDARIES?** The concept of “boundaries” relates to our sense of self. At birth and for a long while after, a baby has no real sense of *who they are*. When we see a baby in his or her mother’s arms, we see two people - the child and the mother. But the baby notices no difference, no division, no boundary between themselves and their mother. A newborn is “one” with their mother. As life goes on, the child notices where their skin ends and their mother’s skin begins. This is our first “boundary,” and the beginning of our sense of self.

When our boundaries are crossed, we are naturally furious at the invasion because we know we could lose our sense of who we are.

### **WHAT GOES WRONG?**

Obviously, if a mother is unable to bond with a child and doesn’t hold her child enough, boundary problems and problems related to sense of self will abound. But things can go wrong in later childhood and in adult life too. When they do, it is usually either because someone treats us like they “own” us, or, paradoxically, like they “disown” us.

### **BEING “OWNED”**

The worst example of being owned is physical or sexual abuse. People who treat us in these ways are insisting that they own our very *bodies*. We can also lose our sense of self in less severe but more constant ways. Some people never hear anything from their parents or partners except orders and complaints. (“Do this!” “Do that!” “You didn’t do that well enough!”) Constant exposure to such treatment can shatter our boundaries and our sense of self.

### **BEING “DISOWNED”**

Paradoxically, being treated like we are not there can also cause boundary and self problems. Beware of anyone who is so preoccupied with their own ego and their own life that you sometimes wonder *if they even know you are there*. This can kill your sense of self, too.

### **ABOUT FEELING CONNECTED**

The saddest thing about boundary problems is that the people who have them can feel “too close” (afraid they’ll lose themselves) and “too far” (very lonely), but they can seldom feel SAFELY IN BETWEEN or CONNECTED with others.

### **THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF BOUNDARY PROBLEMS**

People whose boundaries are weak also tend to violate the boundaries of others. If you don’t know that you have boundaries that must be respected, then you also don’t know that other people have boundaries *you* must respect.

### **THE WAY OUT**

First of all, people with these problems should get therapy. This is too difficult to solve completely on your own.

### **Therapy Can Support What You Need To Do For Yourself:**

- Learn to identify even the most subtle ways *you* violate the boundaries of others. Become excellent at noticing when people “back away,” emotionally and physically. When they do, you can be pretty sure you have just violated their boundaries.
- Once you become accustomed to noticing the boundaries of others, begin to notice that **you have many of the same boundaries yourself!**
- Learn how to **object** whenever *any* of your boundaries are crossed, even in the smallest ways and even by people with the kindest intentions.

- Test various ways of telling people when they cross your boundaries. Allow yourself to make mistakes while you learn (by sounding either too angry or too nice). **Experiment.** Notice what works and what doesn't. With close friends who might understand, you might even tell them that you are learning about protecting yourself (so they can understand why you are acting differently toward them).
- Keep reminding yourself: "People need my **permission** before they cross my boundaries!"
- Remind yourself also: "Nobody should ever help me unless I **ASK** them to!"

If people have constantly crossed your boundaries, it may seem unfair to say that you have to stop crossing their boundaries first.

But if you've been taking such treatment for many years, the sad truth is you may not even *know* what boundaries you are entitled to have!

The best way to learn this is to focus first on the boundaries of the people around you.

As you catch yourself violating the boundaries of others, don't pick on yourself! Remember, you are just now beginning to learn about all of this.

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If you have difficulty creating strong boundaries and feeling safely connected to others, I can help you understand your feelings and experiences and move forward in your life.

Wishing you peace for the upcoming season and the courage to create strong boundaries,

Dan Lippmann

P.S. I want to thank all of you who have recently referred friends and family to me. If your friends would like more information on my services, have them visit my website at [www.wellness-innovations.com](http://www.wellness-innovations.com). Please forward this newsletter to anyone who is experiencing stress.

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Dan Lippmann has more than 25 years of individual and marital counseling experience. After facilitating his own recovery from a chronic pain condition in 1987, Mr. Lippmann began collaborating with experts in the field of mind-body health to develop innovative stress reduction and wellness techniques. He has been cited as a "Master Practitioner" in the book, *Light Years Ahead*, and in July 1999 his work on stress reduction was featured in the *Chicago Tribune*. He has also been interviewed about his work on radio and television. To receive this free monthly email newsletter, visit [www.wellness-innovations.com](http://www.wellness-innovations.com).