

Resources

Here are a few of our favorite websites and books.

Websites

- be-lovedblog.com
- Liesyoungwomenbelieve.com
- Incourage.me

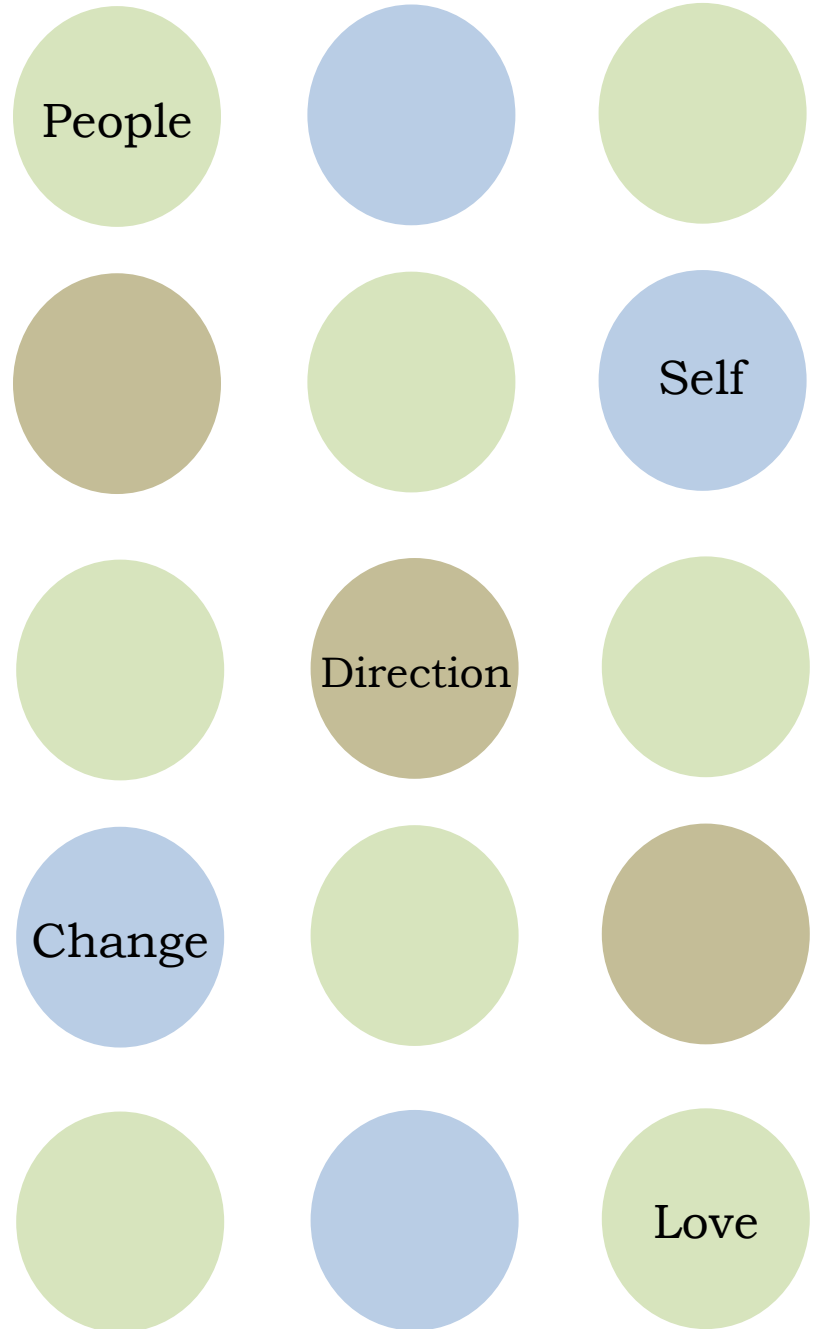
Books

- Friendships Don't Just Happen!: The Guide to creating a meaningful circle of girlfriends
- The Woman Behind the Mask: Trading your façade for authentic life
- Life's Healing Choices: Freedom from your hurts, hang-ups, and habits
- Self-Nurture: Learning to care for yourself as effectively as you care for everyone else.

You. Are. Amazing.

As. you. are.
Stronger than you know.
More beautiful than you think.
Worthier than you believe.
More loved than you can ever imagine.
Passionate about making a difference.
Fiery when protecting those you love.
Learning. Growing. Not alone.
Warm. Giving. Generous.
Quirky. Funny. Smart.
Flawed. Whole. Scared. Brave.

Encourage(meant)



Welcome

Hey, we are so glad you have a copy of Encourage(meant)!

We have put together articles and ideas meant to encourage you as you journey through young adulthood.

Even though we are 'old', we remember what it was like to navigate the uncertain waters of becoming. All the questions and uncertainties, new experiences, redefining relationships, and having to make tough decisions can be overwhelming!

Know that you are not alone. Every young woman faces the same basic issues in some form, and all of us 'old folk' have already passed through where you are walking today.

We hope you are encouraged as you read the following articles on relationships, self-view, and doing meaningful things.

You probably know another young woman who is struggling with some or all of these issues too, so feel free to pass along a copy of Encourage(meant) to her as well.

We are praying that you are blessed with what you read, that you are empowered to share with other young women in your life, and that you find encourage(meant) in the words written here.

Check out the back page for books and websites that will be helpful as you continue your journey.

Blessings!

What is True Friendship?

Be-lovedblog.com

Friendship

Our friendships can be the source of some angst. As a result, we can get pretty wrapped up in the pain our friends have caused us or in our desire to have more friends in order to feel more loved and accepted. But God's Word encourages us to shift our focus *away* from our own needs and *toward* the needs of others.

Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."

This certainly applies to our friendships. That's why I want to challenge you to focus more on *being* a friend than *having* the right friends or the right number of friends.

You are called to be a true friend. If your focus is on who likes you, you're not pursuing true friendship. That's not a spiritual mind-set. Ask the Lord to help you be more concerned about who *needs* you than who *likes* you.

But just what are the qualities of a good friend? Let's use Galatians 5:22–23 as our guide. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

What kind of friend are you? Are you loving, patient, kind, good, faithful gentle and self-controlled? Do you seek to demonstrate Christ's love to others by *being* a good friend?

There are people who need your friendship. Ask God to give you eyes to see who they are and start becoming a friend today.

So what do you say, are you willing to shift your focus away from having more friends—and even from the drama that your current friendships may be causing—and toward *becoming* a *true* friend to others in need?

What are some ways that you can begin to reach out to others around you in the spirit of true friendship?

Real

Taking off

Our Masks

Jennifer Jarrett

Oscar Wilde once said, "Be yourself, everyone else is already taken."

Throughout our lives, and even more specifically, throughout any given day, we choose from a myriad of masks and hide our true selves behind whichever one seems to be most insulating and protective at that time. We hide because we don't want to expose who we really are. We hide because we are afraid that if we allow our true selves to be truly seen we will be rejected, ridiculed or dismissed. We pretend to be someone other than who we really are.

It eventually becomes much harder to wear the masks than it is to be authentically and completely who we are. We discover that the fear is only blocking us from our truth and just plain getting in the way of us living a full and vibrant life. The masks become barriers instead of protection. Maybe we begin to experiment with setting the masks aside for moments, then days and then even longer as we experience what it feels like to be truly seen and loved for who we really are.

These masks create a false sense of love and self and everything else that is latent with expectations for how we want something to be and we become so attached to those expectations. All that does is put conditions, boundaries and limitations on love. But, by resisting the temptation to live in that masked world of false reality we can open ourselves to more love and compassion and joy that is already a part of what really is.

And, then it becomes even bigger. Because as we become more accepting of ourselves, we become more accepting of others. We realize that when we can genuinely let love in, we can then genuinely let love out. Everything becomes more spacious. More expansive. Then there can be this subtle surrendering to what really is. When we settle into that space of loving acceptance of ourselves and others, we don't confine ourselves or them to a set and very limited expectation of who we all should be. Instead, we hold the space for everyone to be completely real. Real doesn't always mean pretty and perfect. In fact, "real" can be incredibly messy, but even with all of the messiness that comes with it, being "real" feels so much better than wearing mask ever did.

Anatomy

101

Tina Shorey

Impact

You probably didn't take an anatomy class based on the Bible. So, because you missed that session, let's do a quick review!

Yep! The Bible teaches about anatomy. Now before you run away, relax! There won't be a quiz and no labs are required!

This class is about value. 1 Corinthians 12:16-25 outlines the various body parts and perhaps a few unconventional conversations between them. I'm serious! Go read it!

Here is the scene: Paul is asking us to imagine a body. Go ahead and think about your body. You likely have the standard equipment: ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, feet, brain. Some people have everything, others have a few less things. But, we all have a body with a brain at least!

So, according to Paul, imagine if your nose decided that it was tired of smelling, decided to see instead. And your hands were weary of all the work they do and wanted a break so they could just sit and smell the roses. Then, the feet decided that wasn't fair – they wanted to smell roses too! And pretty soon, all of the body is dedicated to smelling flowers. Crazy right?! How could you possibly function if the only thing you could do was smell?

This silliness brings across a point about who you are in relation to others in the world. You may feel like you have reached your zenith, or you may not even know how to get out of your own way yet. You likely have dreams and wishes, hopes and fears. And figuring out how you fit in with the people around you can be crazy at times!

Paul may have needed a few anatomy classes, but his point was that each body part is important. If you have ever broken a toe or finger you can attest to how difficult it is to walk or write. God has a plan for each person. He has a plan for YOU! You are important – it doesn't matter if you are just starting college, looking for a job after graduation, tending to small children, or wondering where life is going to take you next. Each person has a vital role to play. Each person has value. No matter what they do, look like, have done, or will do.

Life

The Real Deal

Paula Hendricks

Have you ever thought about what it means to be a young woman? I'm not talking about a young woman the way the world defines it, but the way God does. After all, He created women, so He should know!

True biblical womanhood is about so much more than the length of your shorts or how long you had your quiet time this morning or the way you interact with guys. Don't get me wrong—dressing modestly and reading the Bible and interacting with guys with purity are all important—but it's possible to do all these things and miss the main point entirely.

- 1. Biblical womanhood starts in the heart.** Proverbs 4:23 it says, "Guard your heart, for out of it flow the wellsprings of life." And God says love Me with all your **heart** in Deuteronomy 6:5. God most definitely wants my heart. God won't be satisfied with *part* of us or *most* of us. He wants *all* of us, beginning with our heart. And biblical womanhood doesn't start on the outside, but works from the inside out.
- 2. True biblical womanhood flows out of a personal, growing relationship with King Jesus.** You search the Scriptures because in them you think you have life, but you do not know that they point to me." *are you spending time every day looking at Jesus in His Word? Listening to His voice? Building a relationship with Him—like you would with anyone else—by spending time with Him, just you two?*
- 3. A biblical woman says, "Yes, Lord" in every area of her life.** How can a woman say "no" to herself and "yes" to the Spirit of God? That's hard! There's really only one way: because she

Forgiving Him

Erin Davis

Relationships

I have a good friend who recently told me that she feels that God is asking her to forgive her dad. Her dad has never asked for forgiveness. In fact, he's never even hinted that he's done anything wrong, even though he has.

Our culture says that forgiveness is unnecessary or at least premature. She should wait until her dad realizes what he's done before letting him off the hook. But this is not how the Bible treats forgiveness.

Perhaps you are saying "There are good guys out there but ... " Not at my school. Not my dad. Not my ex-boyfriend. Not at my church.

I bet those "buts" come from a place of hurt. You've been wounded, and it's changed the way you see the guys around you. I have a feeling that the worlds twisted views on forgiveness and relationships have wormed their way into your heart.

So what should you do if you've been hurt by a guy? How can you deal with the bitterness that makes you feel like godly men are an endangered species? What should you do when the guy who hurt you won't even acknowledge his mistakes?

The answer is simple. Forgive him. The application of that answer is rarely easy, but that doesn't mean bitterness is an easier road.

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and then expecting the other person to get sick. In truth, holding onto your bitterness toward that guy will affect you more than it will ever affect him. That's why Jesus gave us this profound warning.

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14–15).

Forgive and be forgiven. Keep a death grip on your pain and miss God's grace. Those are your options.

Here is one approach to dealing with bitterness:

- Confess bitterness as sin.
- Ask God to forgive you for that root of bitterness, for that anger, for what maybe has become a hard heart toward Him or others.
- Then would you receive God's grace? Would you ask Him to fill your heart with His love, forgiveness, mercy toward the people who have most hurt you, toward an ex-mate, toward a stepchild, toward a parent who hurt you so deeply?

My friend is making the choice to stop sipping poison and to trust God to change the hearts of the men who have hurt her. Will you join her?

Worth

Be this, be that, be more, be less, be everything.

Forget comments like those from the world, beloved.

Your presence, including every physical characteristic and personality trait, were not only thought of – but were taken extremely seriously by the Creator of the universe. He knows you; He didn't make any mistakes or smudges in your creation.

Give thanks to the Lord for *“you are fearfully and wonderfully made”* in His image (Psalm 139:14).

According to His plan, your life has purpose. Your purpose is to seek Him, love Him, and to make Him known through the talents and desires He placed in you.

You are not required to be more, or less, or everything. All you are required to be is broken before Him, embody an eagerness to live a whole life according to the Bible, and have a heart solely for Him.

You see, you are enough in the eyes of God.

You are worthy of love.

You are worthy of joy and peace.

You are worthy of an education, success, and prosperity in life.

You are worth fighting for – every day, every moment, every minute.

You are more than enough, beloved.

You are Enough

Ashley Chu

I Can See Into Your Future

Erin Davis

Direction

No, I don't have a crystal ball. I can't predict what circumstances your future holds. But I do know what kind of woman you're going to be down the road. She's the same kind of woman you are right now.

Like it or not, what you choose to do now will either form habits you have to break in the future or habits that are helpful to you. In other words, “you are what you are becoming.”

In Galatians 6:7 we read, “ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that he will also reap.” You are making choices right now that are planting seeds in the dirt of your life. Those seeds will grow up to determine who you are, and what your life looks like in the future.

Let me give you some practical examples of this Truth in action. Do you want to marry a Christian? Then commit to only date Christians now. The best predictor of your future relationships is the patterns you're developing in your current relationships. Do you want to have a more serious relationship with God "someday" but for now you're funneling your energy into work, or friends, or academics? Make Him your number one priority now. Do you want to serve God with your whole heart? Look for ways to serve Him that way today. Do you want your future choices to be based on God's will for your life? Seek His insight in the choices you are making today. Learn His Word so that you can prepare for a future grounded in God's Truth. Do you plan to give up a bad habit, or a toxic relationship, or a pattern of sin “someday” but hold on to it for now because you're young and it doesn't seem to matter? Give it up now before it has the chance to grow into a thorn bush in your life.

“ Habits are a result of seemingly insignificant individual choices and acts that you sow when you're twelve, fifteen, or twenty. They can be good or bad. You'll reap what you sow. You're sowing seeds now. What you do with your time, your eating habits, your exercise habits, the way you talk, the way you treat your friends, the way you spend your money, the way you work, your sleep habits...These are the habits you are developing today...

Choices matter: the books you read, the magazines you read, the television programs you watch, the music you listen to, the conversations you have, the friends you choose, what time you go to bed, what time you get up in the morning. Little things matter a lot” (Lies Young Women Believe, 166-167).

Sexuality

Let's Talk About It

Bethany Baird

Although the topic of sex is blaring in our faces from the checkout lines in the grocery store to the billboards we pass on the highway, it can be difficult to talk about. Why are we so "hush-hush" about the whole topic? It's like the elephant in the room that we try to ignore.

One of the reasons we are so bashful about sex is because of the bad rep sex has received. True, the type of sex that the world promotes to us is shameful, awkward, and embarrassing. But it is completely out of context and distorted from God's original intent.

First Thessalonians 4:3–5 says, "It is God's will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God."

We need to save our view of sex from the casual, cheap imitation that the world is offering to us. I love the way Mary Kassian puts it in her book *Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild*:

Are we like a senseless child playing with dollar-store baubles when a gold locket is being offered to us? The media has been offering us dollar-store baubles for way too long. We need to throw away their cheap imitations of sex and instead pick up the priceless true gift of sex that God has created.

No matter what your experience in the past or your view on sex now, God wants you to understand the deep God-glorifying sex that He talks about in Song of Solomon. The catch is we can't get the beautiful sex God describes by living and playing according to our own rules. We have to live according to God's standards and within His guidelines.

If you are interested in learning about God's design for your future sex life, here are a few books to start with:

- *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)* by Josh Harris
- *And The Bride Wore White* by Dannah Gresh
- *Passion and Purity* by Elisabeth Elliot

Here are some questions to think about/discuss with your friends:

- How have you been influenced by the culture's view on sex?
- What does God's Word have to say about sex?
- How can you gain a holy, God-glorifying view on sex?
- What does Song of Solomon say about sex?

New Labels

Bethany Baird

What does your label say? No, I'm not talking about the tag in the back of your shirt. I'm talking about the invisible labels that no one else can see, but you can. I'm talking about the kind of labels you wish you could rip right off.

I would define those labels this way: When people look at me, all they see is...

However you'd fill in that blank, that's your label. Maybe your labels have to do with the physical. You think that when people look at you all they see is your height, weight, skin, or hair. These labels are usually tied to whatever it is about us that makes us feel the most insecure. The truth is, other people don't focus on *our* appearance near as much as we think they do, but that doesn't keep us from wearing invisible labels.

There are other labels we often wear. Labels tied to our mistakes, our circumstances, who we used to be. Sometimes our labels look good, almost like designer labels, but they still make us feel yucky. Maybe when people look at you, you think all they see is that you're a straight A student, a good worker, or good girl. Those things aren't bad, but no one wants to be defined by them. Some of us wear so many labels, it's like we own our very own invisible label maker. Every time someone sizes us up, we slap a new label on and wear it around.

There's a story in the Bible about a girl who knew a thing or two about labels. You can read the whole thing in John 8:2–11, but here is the short version. A woman was caught committing adultery. That meant that she could be stoned. She must have felt doomed as she was dragged into the temple courts. But Jesus intervened. He bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. then stood up and said "Let him who is without be the first to throw a stone." Later he said "Woman, where are they? No one has condemned you and neither am I.

All people saw was her sin. If we could see her invisible labels, we'd read: Adulteress, Guilty, Sinner, Failure But Jesus ripped those labels right off. He offered her new ones: Forgiven, Clean, Loved, Free

Jesus is in the business of replacing labels. Those invisible labels that cause you pain? He can rip them off. He can replace them with labels based on His steadfast love for you, His willingness to freely forgive you, His desire to use you to do things for *His* kingdom . . .

I guess you can keep wearing those invisible labels if you want to. You may have

Love

Time

Isn't it About Time?

Tina Shorey

Time is something that nobody seems to have enough of – at least once childhood has been gotten through! College, careers, relationships, family, church all vie for our time.

Time management is frequently talked about, and while there are some good tips out there, I feel they often do not cover the really important issue: Time for You.

Women tend to rush around, full calendar in hand wondering if they are going to make it to the end of the day/week/month/year. And, when looking at all those activities, I bet you can justify everything on your calendar! I'm not here to challenge you about that. My calendar is pretty full and I would hate for you to see it and start chopping MY activities!

However, I am learning (yes, the hard way) what it means to take time for myself. No, I haven't found ways to turn a 24-hour day into a 48-hour one. I'm not sure I would want to actually!

When you value yourself, determine that your physical, emotional, and spiritual life is as important (if not more so) than all the other items on your calendar, when you choose to care for yourself; then making time in that schedule for you becomes a priority.

If you are well cared for, you will be able to complete necessary tasks better, attend to the 'others' in your life needing attention, and perhaps even discover a few things that don't need to be on that to-do list!

Here are some tips I have found useful in my quest to take better care of me:

Make it a date. Put self-care time on your daily calendar and be determined to keep the appointment. Spending quiet time with yourself helps keep you in touch with what is going on inside.

Clear away the clutter. On your calendar that is. Look critically at your list of things to do and be gentle on yourself and realistic. There is also clutter in your head. Things you need to remember to do, relationships that need mending, thoughts that need to be considered. Write them in a journal. Setting them aside in written form frees you to care for yourself without

Covered In Love

Rachel Collins

Healing

In this life I have observed that every time we experience something unpleasant, we seek something in which to take shelter in, to cover us. This may take form in a job, a friendship, a hobby, you name it! Until we find joy and comfort, we may continue to move on from one thing to the next frantically searching for something that will heal and satisfy. In an attempt to prevent the possibility of ever experiencing that "something" again, we enter beneath a blanket to hide. We seek shelter to cover and protect any open wounds that may develop, and fear begins to take root.

The truth is that every time Jesus reveals more of His love to us, the revelation of our "real self" becomes known. Why? Because fear leaves as restoration takes place. His love is perfected in us, which drives out all fear. This is why our identity is found only in His love. My identity is not found in where I live, what job I have or who I'm friends with, but it is rooted in the love of the most gracious Father.

Every time His love is revealed, we grow in our true self-knowledge. Our identity as the beloved ones becomes known to us; the fact that we are loved by God — we were a dream in His heart before He formed the earth and He has woven every fiber within us together. It is His love that defines us. As a beloved daughter, the Father knows exactly how we think and how we function; what triggers tears to well up within and what causes joy to spill out and overflow. He knows! And as we begin to ask Him, "Father, how do You see me? What is it about me that You wanted me in the first place? Why am I Your favorite?" He comes to us with tenderness and speaks truth of our belonging into existence.

He beckons us and calls us by name to rest in His heartbeat. God wants us to come to that place and as we begin to get little glimpses of how He sees us, something in us gets shaped; something in us becomes strong and something in us grows and establishes a platform for God to begin to move.

The love of God restores us, and He restores because He loves. He makes all things new. He takes us to safe places, and He rescues His beloved children because He is filled with delight over each (Psalm 18).

We are refreshed and restored when we choose to come under the covering

Family

Born This Way

Think back to the newborn baby version of you (I bet you were cute). You couldn't have survived without relationships with others. In fact, experiments have been done where babies had all of their physical needs met. They were fed, sheltered, and given medicine when sick but were deprived of human interaction. Most of those babies died. Their need for relationship overrode the fact that their other basic needs were being met. These experiments proved that our need for meaningful relationships is a huge part of who we are and how well we swim the waters of life.

Our longing to connect with others reaches far beyond infancy. We are all hardwired with the desire to attach to others. We see this clearly with the very first person God ever created. God knows about our need for relationships with others, and He has provided many, many ways for that need to be met.

First, He allows us to have a relationship with Him. We can talk and interact with Him even though He is the God of the universe. That's mind-blowing stuff, but He doesn't ignore that we also need to connect with other people. He has given us families to connect with from birth. But He didn't stop there. God gave us the Church as a place where we can bond with other believers and find like-minded people to walk with side-by-side as we journey through life.

You see, you and I were not intended to live the Christian life alone. **We weren't intended to do it by ourselves, and we cannot survive without having an active role in each other's lives.**

Making the effort to find and keep meaningful relationships is a matter of survival. Trying to live life without others won't go well and trying to stay firm in your faith all alone is close to impossible. Sure, relationships can get messy and it takes effort to maintain solid friendships and good communication with your family, but understanding that you need relationships should motivate you to keep working hard on your

Creating healthy boundaries is empowering. By recognizing the need to set and enforce limits, you protect your self-esteem, maintain self-respect, and enjoy healthy relationships. Personal boundaries, just like a "No Trespassing" sign, define where you end and others begin and are determined by the amount of physical and emotional space you allow between yourself and others.

Types of Personal Boundaries

1. Physical: includes your body, sense of personal space, sexual orientation, and privacy. These are expressed through clothing, shelter, noise tolerance, verbal instruction, and body language.

Examples of physical boundary invasions are:

- Inappropriate touching, such as unwanted sexual advances.
- Looking through others' personal files and emails.
- Not allowing others their personal space. (e.g., barging into your boss's office without knocking)

2. Emotional and Intellectual: protect your sense of self-esteem and ability to separate your feelings from others'. When you have weak emotional boundaries, it's like getting caught in the midst of a hurricane with no protection. You expose yourself to being greatly affected by others' words, thoughts, and actions and end up feeling bruised, wounded, and battered. These include beliefs, behaviors, choices, sense of responsibility, and your ability to be intimate with others.

Examples of emotional and intellectual boundary invasions are:

- Not knowing how to separate your feelings from your partner's and allowing his/her mood to dictate your level of happiness or sadness
- Sacrificing your plans, dreams, and goals in order to please others.
- Not taking responsibility for yourself and blaming others for your problems.

It seems obvious that no one would want his/her boundaries violated. So why do we allow it? Why do we NOT enforce or uphold our boundaries?

1. FEAR of rejection and, ultimately, abandonment or confrontation
2. GUILT.
3. We were not taught healthy boundaries.

Tips for Setting Healthy Boundaries

- When you identify the need to set a boundary, do it clearly, calmly, firmly, respectfully, and in as few words as possible.
- You are not responsible for the other person's reaction
- At first, you will probably feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed when you set a boundary. Do it anyway and tell yourself you have a right to self-care
- When you feel anger or resentment or find yourself whining or complaining,

How to Create Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries