

# Barriers or Boundaries

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

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What is it about the self that creates such a mess? Is it not the hard lines it draws around things, people and events? We go to a restaurant and we 'know' what apple pie and custard should taste like. When we taste the one we have bought, we are disappointed. Now it may be that the pie is not so good. I once had apple pie, years ago now, and when I put my fork into it, the crust was so hard it broke into pieces and some flung themselves off the plate. I didn't think the cook would appreciate my pretend interest by asking how much cement went into the crust. But it was difficult to enjoy. Looking back, if it had been the first apple pie and custard I had tasted, I no doubt would have thought it should be like that and thoroughly enjoyed it. What about our politics? We draw hard lines around our views. I would never vote for ... Now we may not vote for that party. But what point the hardness around it. It stops us acknowledging that there is some good in all parties. The undecided floating voter is considered weak and no political party likes them. Relationships too. Do we not draw comfort lines around our friendship group. Closed groups are cosy, but they are closed and self-serving. Such can be viewed as barriers. It suggests hardening, inability to change even though change is all around us. How do we know when barriers are being breached? When threats arise to the status quo, fear and aversion arise. We react to protect, maintain. Unless we can be mindful of our aversive reaction, there cannot be a creative response. We defend our positions sometimes at great cost. Boundaries are more fluid. The beach is sometimes the land and sometimes the sea. It's not that boundaries allow everything. They don't have to be porous. One can create conditions, but they allow us to be flexible. How do we know when boundaries are being breached? An amorphous discomfort. A feeling of invasiveness. At worst a loss of personal dignity. When I became a monk, I kept up my friendly, easy going relationship with people. This was fine, except when someone became 'familiar'. Suddenly it was a slap on the back and 'how are you doing, Bodhi?' I felt I was at fault by trying to be a 'mate' and it was not quite in line with the dignity the Buddha would have his monastics behave. So that's when I asked people to address me as Bhante. This keeps a respectable distance between myself and the person I am talking to. It also stopped me behaving sloppily - at least in public! I was lodging with a friend and I told him I expected a phone call at a certain time. Just before the allotted, he received a call. As the allotted time came for my call, I called out to remind him. Unfortunately he heard my reminder as a command. I got an earful which reminded me that hosts have their boundaries and I needed to respect these. Barriers or Boundaries - is it just human nature? Have a look!

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