

# Clarke Counseling Center

Monthly Newsletter

MAY 2011



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## Coming Events

### Monthly Adult AD/HD Support Group.

(Meets 4th Thursday of every month) Next one is Thursday, May 26th.

Cost:

\$50 at the door  
\$45 in advance, or  
pay for 4 sessions up front  
and pay only \$175 (save \$25)

To reserve your seat, call  
or e-mail Sherry Clarke at  
301-515-1321.

### Next Conscious Dating Workshop

Dates: Fri., Jun. 17: 7  
PM - 9:30 PM and including  
Sat., Jun. 18: 9:30 AM - 5  
PM

Where: 13827 Bronco  
Place, Germantown, MD  
20974

Cost: \$99 - Early Bird  
Special 'til Jun 10; \$109  
after that; \$89 per person if  
3 or more sign up together.  
Pay by Check, Credit  
Card or PayPal.

Includes: 9 hour workshop;  
workbook and supplies;  
Friday night refreshments

## Greetings!

Spring reminds us of new life and I am so happy to announce some very special new "spring grandbabies" - little Sophia Helene (#10 grandchild), born March 2; and little AnaLucia Ruth (#11 grandchild), born May 9th.



This issue of my monthly newsletter focuses on boundaries in relationships. They are important and often misunderstood or mis-applied. Take a moment to read about them.

I am ready to help you set appropriate boundaries, or deal with other difficult areas of life. My specialties are:

- [Life Coaching](#)
- [Adult AD/HD](#)
- [Marriage and Family Therapy](#)
- [Conscious Dating Workshop Facilitator](#)
- [Individual and Pre-Marital Counseling](#)

Sincerely,

Sherry Clarke MA, LCMFT

## Boundaries and Intimacy

Dr. Phil looks at the young couple and zeroes in on the wife. He declares, "You've GOT to set some boundaries in your relationship." Then it's off to another commercial and the viewing audience watches several 30-second segments in a row, pondering the idea of



"boundaries" while being sold skin moisturizers

or floor mops. Dr. Phil never has time to discuss the concept of boundaries, nor does he mention how to set them.

What is a "boundary" in a relationship? To understand boundaries, it is important to understand intimacy. Intimacy is a continuum. The more you allow another person to see your vulnerability, the more intimate you are with that person. Healthy people have boundaries in place to keep people away from their vulnerabilities, when that distance is necessary. A healthy boundary is a boundary that allows the other person as much access to your vulnerability as possible while still keeping you safe. An unhealthy boundary, on the other hand, is either too dominant and restrictive or too wimpy and lenient. It will either keep you from having the

and Saturday lunch; and \$15 value CD

To reserve your seat, call or [e-mail](#) Sherry Clarke at 301-515-1321.

#### Speaking Engagements:

June 25 - LDS Singles Conference in Annapolis, MD. Topic - "Embrace Principles of Conscious Dating"

July 28 - Jewish "Over 50" Singles Group in Rockville, MD. Topic - "How Can You Consciously Date?"

#### Quick Links

[Clarke Counseling Ctr. Sherry's Coaching Is . . . About Your Coach](#)

[Relationship Coaching for Singles](#)  
[Free E-Program Signup](#)  
[Relationship Resources](#)

[AD/HD Life Coaching](#)

[Marriage and Family Therapy](#)  
[Getting the Most From Couples Therapy](#)

[Testimonials](#)  
[Client Forms](#)

[Join Our Mailing List](#)

intimacy you want in life or it will let in too much of the "riff-raff," resulting in your being hurt.

Think of a boundary as an imposing 12-foot fence with sharp razor-wire on top. There are times and places where such a fence is warranted - surrounding a gold depository, for instance. But think of that same fence set up in the middle of your living room. It is there to protect you sitting in your favorite recliner chair while you read. This use of the fence would be inappropriate and building it would be a massive waste of resources and energy. Now think of a large room full of gold (such as in Fort Knox). Think of the door to that room as being similar to your bathroom door - wooden, with no massive locks or security devices. The use of this door would be inappropriate, and to have it as a "boundary" to protect a massive gold deposit would be irresponsible.

Setting boundaries in relationships begins with determining a realistic degree of safety. If you are truly threatened in a relationship, appropriate boundaries could include physical distance, real alarm systems or real guard dogs. In most situations, however, boundaries are verbal. Saying, "No, I will not allow you to treat me that way" in a firm, even voice, will usually suffice. Often, however, people allow their vulnerability to show through when trying to set their boundaries. Such a person might say the same thing - "No, I will not allow you to treat me that way" - but in a quavering, fearful voice. Unfortunately, some abusive people actually become more abusive when they encounter another's vulnerability.

When the stakes are high and you are truly under threat, it would be important to practice setting your boundaries before you actually set them. Pay attention to the energy in your posture and in your voice. Have a friend or (better yet) a trained expert listen to you while you practice. They can help you know how you are coming across. Conversely, if you find you are lacking intimacy in your life, they can help you discover how you may have unconsciously set up boundaries that are too imposing. Do you have intimacy-killing "fences" around your heart?

Setting appropriate boundaries is an art. It is always good to remember that the goal is a comfortable level of intimacy. Getting to that goal is a process that includes appropriate boundary setting. When we bring that process into conscious awareness, rather than leaving it to our unconscious minds, we will have better success.

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## Counselor's Corner

### Boundaries

If you put a well-behaved child in a room and tell him, "You can play in this room, but there are things in the room you are not allowed to play with," you will produce a child who does not feel free to play. But if you put a child in a room and tell them,



"You can play in this room, but I have placed items in THIS corner of the room that you are not allowed to play with," the child will feel free to be creative and playful.

Likewise, when we set boundaries in our relationships, it allows us and others to feel free to be who and how we want to be. When we are unsure of the boundaries, we are tentative and uncomfortable.

Common behavioral boundaries in relationships are:

- Physical violence ("There will be no physical violence in our relationship")
- Fidelity ("I require total fidelity in this relationship")
- Speech ("No one may speak around me in disrespectful, contentious, sarcastic or rude tones")
- Jokes ("You are not allowed to make fun of my weight or my age")

Setting a boundary can be more successful when it is accompanied by a clear statement of consequences. This can be done while treating others with proper respect. To an equal partner (spouse, co-worker, friend, etc.), you might say, "If this action continues, I will leave the room." But you should avoid saying - "If this action continues, you must leave the room." Unless your relationship with someone is to be unequal (ie., parent-child, employer-employee, etc.), you should only offer consequences based on actions that YOU will take. It is very important to follow through on those consequences.

Successful, intimate relationships involve boundaries, but those boundaries are seldom mentioned or invoked because it is unnecessary to do so. If you find yourself constantly having to invoke boundaries, it may be time to re-evaluate the relationship.

Sincerely,

Sherry Clarke MA, LCMFT

## Interesting Quotes About Intimacy

"My friends tell me I have intimacy problems, but they don't know me, so who cares what they think?" - Gary Shandling

"I've often thought that my lack of intimacy with those around me is the fault of those around me." - Luke Ford

"Passion is the quickest to develop, and the quickest to fade away. Intimacy develops more slowly, and commitment more gradually still." - Robert



Sternberg

"The married are those who have taken the terrible risk of intimacy and, having taken it, know life without intimacy to be impossible."

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