

### Parenting - Family Boundaries

Most families that come to see me struggle a great deal with exercising appropriate boundaries. What are family boundaries? They are the lines that should separate the different parts of a family. These parts or subgroups are the **Grandparents**, the **Parents**, and the **Siblings**. Healthy limits are supposed to separate these family subgroups by the sharing of special emotional connections, possession of information, and the exercise of authority or influence. That is, each subgroup is supposed to have **1)** an emotional connection that is deep and completely unique to that subgroup (including a thriving sexual relationship for the **Grandparent** and **Parent** subgroups); **2)** each subgroup should have its own information exchange, a good portion of which is completely private to that subgroup; and **3)** each subgroup should exercise authority or influence that is appropriate to the subgroup (e.g., although the **Sibling** subgroup will influence the other subgroups, this subgroup should have authority only over their own bodies and property until the adolescent years when they assume more adult responsibilities). Having said this, I find that many families I meet have substantial blurring of the limits that are meant to exist between the subgroups. Perhaps a **Grandparent** is allowed to have more authority or influence than is appropriate in the lives of a **Parent** subgroup (which damages both subgroups). Or, perhaps a **Sibling** is a confidant of one or both **Parents**, blurring the boundaries of emotional connection and information exchange (which damages all **Siblings**, as well as the **Parental** subgroup). Many times, one or more **Siblings** are allowed to have too much authority in a family because of a weak **Parental** subgroup. See my other article on Boundary Violations for more information on family boundary issues.