

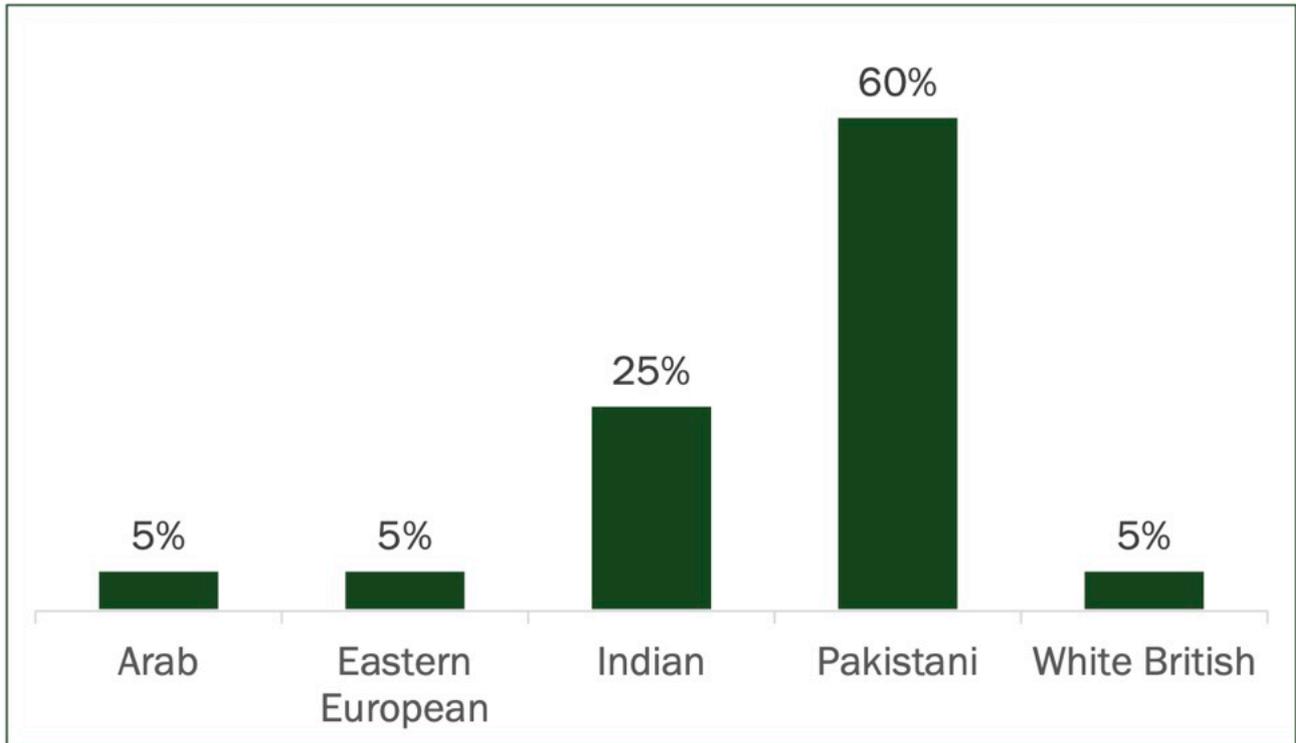


HEALTHY BOUNDARIES FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

JUNE 2025



Ethnicity of Participants



Overview

The “Healthy Boundaries for Healthy Relationships” session, led by Fatima Rasool, provided an insightful and culturally sensitive exploration into the importance of setting personal boundaries from both psychological and Islamic perspectives. The session was attended by a diverse group of women from local communities, many of whom shared their personal experiences and challenges in maintaining healthy relationships within the context of family, faith, and cultural expectations.

Fatima Rasool, who has dedicated the past decade to women’s emotional well-being, brought a wealth of experience to the session. Drawing on her background as an Unani Tibb Practitioner, Qi Gong instructor, and certified Life Coach in the Quranic Science of the Nafs, she guided attendees through the emotional, spiritual, and practical aspects of establishing boundaries.

Session Outline

The session addressed five key themes:

1. What healthy boundaries are and why they are essential.
2. Common challenges women face when trying to set boundaries.
3. The typical reactions and resistance encountered.
4. How to set boundaries clearly and respectfully.
5. Managing emotions during the process of boundary-setting.



Participants were encouraged to reflect on their personal values, understand the consequences of boundary neglect, and explore how to align self-care with their faith.

The discussion highlighted that boundaries are not acts of defiance or selfishness but essential components of emotional well-being and spiritual integrity. Fatima emphasised that Islam advocates for balance, self-respect, and compassion, all of which support the principle of personal limits.

This session is in response to the work we have done with regards CSE, DV and through our general work in addressing sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy. Many of the women we work with have highlighted unhealthy relationships in their lives.

Setting healthy boundaries is a vital aspect of maintaining personal well-being, nurturing respectful relationships, and achieving spiritual balance. Despite common misconceptions, establishing boundaries is neither selfish nor unkind; rather, it is a necessary act of self-care and self-respect. This report explores the reasons individuals often struggle to set boundaries, the consequences of neglecting them, and how boundaries can be understood and implemented within an Islamic framework.

Main Themes Covered

The session began by defining boundaries as the personal limits we set to protect our health and sense of self. These limits help us to communicate our needs clearly and to maintain respectful relationships. It was acknowledged that many women find it difficult to assert boundaries, particularly within family settings or when dealing with elders. Cultural expectations, fear of upsetting others, and a desire to be seen as respectful or dutiful were all identified as common obstacles.

A key point of discussion was the widespread belief that setting boundaries is somehow selfish or contrary to Islamic teachings. This misconception was challenged during the session, with facilitators highlighting that Islam promotes balance, self-respect, and compassion—principles that are entirely in keeping with the idea of healthy boundaries.

One participant shared, *“I’ve always felt I had to say yes to everything, especially when it came from family. I didn’t realise how much that was affecting me emotionally.”*

Another added, *“It was comforting to hear that I’m not alone in this. The pressure to always be available is something many of us carry.”*

Then Fatima helped the women understand that boundary-setting is not selfish or un-Islamic, explaining that Islam promotes balance, self-respect, and compassion, principles that support healthy boundaries.



Emotional Strain

Fatima encouraged the women attending to speak openly about the emotional strain caused by a lack of boundaries. Many described feeling exhausted, taken for granted, or resentful when they were unable to say no or express their needs. The session explored how this can lead to tension in relationships and, over time, emotional burnout.

One attendee reflected, *“I didn’t realise how much resentment I was holding until I started thinking about what I’ve been tolerating. It’s draining.”*



Another commented, *“I’ve always thought being a good person meant putting others first, but I’m learning that I can care for others without neglecting myself.”*

The benefits of setting clear and respectful boundaries were discussed, including improved communication, stronger relationships, and a greater sense of personal peace. The importance of self-care was emphasised, with participants encouraged to see rest, solitude, and personal time as necessary for maintaining well-being.

Islamic Perspective and Spiritual Relevance

A particularly powerful part of the session focused on the Islamic understanding of boundaries. It was explained that Allah (SWT) Himself sets limits for the benefit of His creation, and that believers are encouraged to do the same in their own lives. The verse, *“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves”* (Qur’an 13:11), was used to highlight the importance of self-awareness and personal responsibility.

This section resonated deeply with attendees. One woman said, *“I’ve always felt guilty for wanting space or time to myself but hearing that Islam supports balance and self-care was a turning point for me.”*

Another shared, *“It was reassuring to know that setting boundaries isn’t about rejecting others, it’s about honouring the trust Allah has placed in me.”*

The Fatima encouraged participants to view boundaries as a form of spiritual discipline, helping them to live with greater clarity and intention.

Language and Perception

The session also addressed how language influences attitudes toward boundaries. For those who found the term “boundaries” uncomfortable, alternatives such as “values,” “principles,” or “personal standards” were suggested. This helped to make the concept more accessible and less confrontational.

One participant noted, *“I’ve always struggled with the word ‘boundary’, it felt harsh. But thinking of it as ‘personal standards’ made it feel more natural and acceptable.”*

The work of Dr Gabor Maté was briefly introduced, with reference to his research on the link between emotional suppression and physical illness. This reinforced the idea that neglecting one’s needs can have serious consequences for both mental and physical health.

Moving Forward: Empowerment Through Boundaries

The session concluded with a forward-looking discussion on how boundaries can serve as a long-term tool for personal empowerment and spiritual growth. It was emphasised that establishing and maintaining boundaries is not a one-off task, but an ongoing process that requires self-awareness, courage, and regular reflection.

Participants were encouraged to ask themselves key questions such as:

- What are my needs?
- What energises me, and what leaves me feeling drained?
- What am I tolerating that no longer serves my well-being or values?

By engaging with these questions, individuals begin to reclaim a sense of agency over their lives. The facilitators stressed that healthy boundaries are not about distancing oneself from others but about honouring the self in order to be present and authentic in relationships.



One participant reflected, *“I’ve realised that setting boundaries doesn’t mean I love people any less, it means I’m learning to love myself as well.”*

Another shared, *“This session helped me see that I can still be kind and generous, but I don’t have to do it at the expense of my own peace.”*

The discussion also highlighted that boundaries are an expression of love, not only for oneself and others, but also for the Creator. Islam teaches that believers are stewards of their own well-being, and that true success lies in living with balance, intention, and clarity. By embracing boundaries as a form of self-respect and spiritual alignment, individuals can begin to build lives marked by dignity, purpose, and inner peace.

As one attendee aptly put it, *“I now see boundaries as a way of protecting the trust Allah has placed in me to care for*

myself.”

Discussion questions covered were:

Q: *How do you set boundaries with elders without coming across as disrespectful?*

A: *“There will be resistance at the start, especially in our cultures, but keep gently repeating your limits. Offer what you can rather than what you cannot – say, ‘I can do this, but not that.’ It’s not rejection, it’s clarity.”*

Q: *Do others need to understand why you’re setting a boundary?*

A: *“It depends on the context. You can explain, but you don’t always have*

to go into detail. A short explanation can help, but you're not obliged to justify everything."

Q: What if someone uses culture to reject a boundary supported by religion?

A: "Start with yourself. Embody the change you want to see. Preaching rarely works. When your content and aligned, others feel the shift. Let your actions speak."

Participant Feedback and Reflections

Feedback from those attending was overwhelmingly positive. Many women expressed a sense of relief and validation, having previously struggled with guilt or confusion around the idea of setting limits. Several participants said they had never considered boundaries from a spiritual perspective before and found this approach both enlightening and reassuring.

"I've always felt uncomfortable saying no, especially to family. But now I understand that I can do so with kindness and still be true to my faith."

"This session has helped me realise that looking after myself is not selfish, it's necessary."

"It's the first time I've heard that boundaries are part of Islam. That alone changed everything for me. I've always felt guilty for needing space."

"I've grown up being told to always say yes, especially to elders. But this gave me confidence that saying no, kindly, is not wrong – it's healthy."

"There was so much comfort in hearing that Allah also sets limits out of wisdom and mercy. It really helped me reframe how I view my own boundaries."

Conclusion

This workshop offered more than practical guidance, it created a space for personal reflection, validation, and growth. Attendees left with a

renewed understanding of the value of boundaries, not only as a psychological necessity but also as a spiritual practice.

The emphasis on compassionate communication, inner transformation, and alignment with Islamic values gave participants confidence to make meaningful changes in their relationships.

Fatima Rasool's gentle yet powerful facilitation style enabled difficult topics to be addressed in a safe and non-judgemental setting. The overwhelmingly positive feedback confirmed the need for more spaces like this, where faith, emotional well-being, and culture can be explored together.

Key takeaways from the event were:

- **Boundaries are acts of self-respect:** They help preserve dignity and emotional balance without compromising faith.
- **Resistance is natural but not permanent:** With consistency and gentleness, boundary-setting becomes easier over time.
- **Spiritual perspective:** Islamic teachings support self-care. Boundaries align with the Quranic principle of individual responsibility and inner reform.
- **Communication is key:** Boundaries need not be confrontational. Clear, calm, and respectful communication fosters mutual understanding.

**Report created by the Tea & Chat participants
supported by the MWC Team**

