

Conversation 12: Staying on Your Own Side Boundaries, Self-Respect, And Emotional Loyalty

There's one question I wish I'd asked myself years ago: **whose side are you on?** Not when life is easy, but when life becomes uncomfortable. When somebody criticises you. When you make a mistake. When someone rejects you. When you disappoint another person. Whose side do you take then?

Most people assume self-abandonment only happens when we say yes instead of no, when we stay in unhealthy relationships, or ignore our own needs. But the **deepest form of self-abandonment** is what happens inside us.

- ♥ Somebody criticises you, and before you've even had time to think, you agree with them.
- ♥ Somebody misunderstands you, and you immediately start rewriting yourself to make them comfortable.
- ♥ You make one mistake and suddenly you're building the case that **you've always been the problem.**

Do you see what happened? The conversation ended externally but it carried on inside you and somehow, somewhere along the way, you quietly swapped teams.

- ♥ You stopped defending yourself.
- ♥ You stopped being curious.
- ♥ You stopped asking whether the criticism was fair, whether the expectation was realistic, whether the blame really belonged to you.

- ♥ You became the first person to find yourself guilty, and that **confirmed act of emotional disloyalty** embedded itself in your nervous system as evidence that you didn't have your own back.

Imagine having a friend who treated you the way you sometimes treat yourself.

- ♥ Every time somebody questioned you, they sided with that person.
- ♥ Every time you fail, they reminded you of every previous mistake.
- ♥ Every time you were hurt, they asked what you'd done to deserve it.

Would you feel safe with them, would you trust them?

Many of us have that relationship with ourselves. No wonder peace has felt so difficult to find. Self-respect begins with a decision that sounds defiant and rebellious: **I will no longer assume that I am the problem.**

- ♥ Sometimes you will get things wrong.
- ♥ Sometimes you will need to apologise.
- ♥ Sometimes you will need to shift your thinking.

Emotionally healthy people do those things, but they don't skip the most important steps: they **investigate** before they **accuse**, they **ask questions** before they reach a **conclusion**, they **gather evidence** before they **accept blame**. Most of us learned something very different. We learned:

- ♥ That harmony mattered more than honesty.
- ♥ That approval mattered more than authenticity.
- ♥ That keeping other people comfortable mattered more than keeping ourselves safe.

Those lessons may have protected you, but they don't have to control you. This is where boundaries begin - not at the edge of your life, but inside it.

A boundary is not simply something you say to another person. It's something you refuse to do to yourself:

- ♥ I will not speak to myself with contempt.
- ♥ I will not explain away my intuition.
- ♥ I will not ignore my exhaustion.
- ♥ I will not betray my values to avoid somebody else's disappointment.

These are some of the most important personal boundaries you'll ever build.

People think a boundary is a wall. I think a boundary is a declaration of *emotional loyalty to yourself*. It quietly says, wherever this conversation goes, I'm not leaving my own side. I won't abandon myself.

That changes the way you engage and listen. You stop treating every opinion as a command. You stop confusing someone's confidence with their correctness. You stop believing that another person's disappointment automatically means you've done something wrong. You become curious instead:

♥ Is This True?

♥ Is It Fair?

♥ Is It Mine?

If it is, you take responsibility, if it isn't, you let it pass - not because you're defensive, because you're discerning. That is self-respect. It isn't making yourself bigger than other people. It isn't winning every argument. It isn't proving you're right. **It's refusing to abandon yourself every time somebody disagrees with you, challenges you, or has an opinion.**

There will be people who don't like your boundaries. They'll call them selfish, cold, they'll say you've changed - and they're right, you have. You've stopped believing that loving someone requires abandoning yourself. You've stopped handing other people unrestricted access to your peace. That isn't selfish. That's showing yourself emotional loyalty.

Every time you abandon yourself to preserve a relationship, the relationship survives another day, but a part of you doesn't. Eventually, the cost becomes too high.

So, here's the invitation. From today onwards, stay on your own side, because somebody must protect the person you've worked so hard to become. **Let that person be you.**

There is something profoundly peaceful about knowing that you no longer must win every argument, convince everyone, be understood by every person you meet. All you need to do is look in the mirror at the end of the day and know one thing: **I didn't abandon myself today.**

That is emotional loyalty. That is self-respect. And that is how you make sure you get out, you stay out and you never go back to the soul-destroying patterns that once sabotaged your life.