**Boundaries are like an Orange: A Juicy Metaphor for Safe, Connected Living**

*By Juliet Grayson*

Boundaries, says Terry Real—founder of the Relational Life Institute—are like an orange.

The outer skin—vivid orange, textured, slightly tough—symbolises our protective boundary. It’s what shields us from the outside world. This is the part that says, *“I will not let in what is harmful, shaming, or intrusive.”* It acts as a filter, discerning what to allow through: it lets in warmth, care, and connection, while keeping out what might bruise or overwhelm. It’s strong, but not a wall—porous enough for intimacy, firm enough for safety.

Just beneath the peel lies the white pith—soft, fibrous, often unnoticed. This inner layer represents our containment boundary. It’s the structure that holds us steady from within. It says, *“I am responsible for what I send out into the world. I won’t lash out, collapse, or spill my pain onto you.”* It helps us self-regulate. It offers a pause, a breath, a moment of choice before we react.

Both parts are essential. Without the outer layer, we take in too much. Without the inner, we risk leaking our pain and reactivity onto others.

And at the centre of the orange? The vibrant, juicy flesh—our essence. The part that is tender, authentic, and worth protecting.

This metaphor reminds us that healthy boundaries are not rigid defences but wise, living membranes. They let us stay connected—without losing ourselves or overwhelming others.

When both boundaries are in place, we can say, with grounded clarity: *I will not take in what harms me. I will not send out what harms you.*

In that balance, something beautiful happens—we become safe to ourselves, and safe to love.

*Juliet enjoys hearing comments about how these talks impact people – both positive and negative. If you have time, please let her know your thoughts*[*https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScMcMLPGU2WY1sUZJKF7l\_BBEi0h5EkRD5lCOn3xpLvvdKnBw/viewform*](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScMcMLPGU2WY1sUZJKF7l_BBEi0h5EkRD5lCOn3xpLvvdKnBw/viewform)

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