

# No Experts

## How to use this card:

*Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on No Experts:*

## Boundary 9: No Experts

At Suppers we do not recognize experts. We value expertise and especially the sharing of experiences but refrain from elevating even well researched personal biases. This boundary helps us keep the focus on biological individuality and the competence of each member to choose his or her own path to a healthier life.

## [Mary Ellen's Story: Sacred Cows](#)

If they asked for a poster child for dietary solutions to mental health problems, I would volunteer.

I am a passionate advocate of nutritional psychology because I got off antidepressants easily once I started eating well. But I have to be careful how I talk at meetings. The topic on the table was the ninth boundary, which reminds us to value expertise without elevating even well researched biases to the status of truth. It was a lively conversation, to put it mildly. We had people who felt they owed their lives to their nutritionists and doctors and others who had had very bad experiences. Personally, I had been on and off hormone replacement therapy, on and off medicine for bone health, shifting around as Medicine changed its mind about how to handle women's bones after menopause. There was an anti-vaccine advocate and several of us who can't believe anybody would be against vaccinating. It was one of those days when we all had to work at nonjudgment. We were drawn into a discussion of fallen "sacred cows" or medical ideas that had once been gospel and then fallen into disfavor.

"It's medical gospel until it's not." One member's mental health issues finally cleared up after an alternative therapy to detox heavy metals. She was particularly skeptical. "They thought I was cuckoo until they found the explanation. Then I was just a patient with some very specific work to do, not some neurotic psycho."

The people in my Suppers group are readers. It seemed everybody was aware of some test, nutrient or procedure that, while once gospel, had fallen out of favor: mammograms, which may help detect a deadly but small risk of preventable death but might also lead to surgery for something that would never become a threat. Hormone replacement therapy, the fountain of youth until they realized it might cause stroke and heart attacks. Arthroscopic surgery: one day yes, the next day no. Low fat is good; oops, no, it's bad. They still can't make up their minds about that one. Eggs are the enemy; no, eggs are the perfect health food.

Cholesterol-lowering drugs are good; oh dear, maybe their side effects are not. Take calcium; well, no, not just calcium. It won't help without vitamin D. But uh oh, now we're taking too much Vitamin D. Don't eat beef. Do eat beef, but not any beef – only grass-fed. Take this drug to prevent osteoporosis. Yikes, it seems to be causing fractures!

It is a challenge in this age of information to know which experts to pay attention to. I have a lot of respect for my doctor and the vaccination program, but considering how much disease is preventable through lifestyle, I have come to a very specific conclusion. I do not want to be the lab rat. My personal expert tells me my surest path to a healthier life is prevention. And for me that includes returning to a diet and lifestyle that – as much as possible – predates all these epidemics.

I will eat food as close as possible to how it occurs in nature. I will move. And I will cultivate relationships that make me feel warm and connected.

**Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers boundary about No Experts.**

**How do you relate to the Suppers boundary that requires members to refrain from elevating even well researched personal biases?**

**One or both of the above questions? 2<sup>nd</sup> is in LM (I-statements)**

**Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)**

- Practice making “I-statements” and share a personal truth about healthy living. (Example: I have learned through experimenting that I feel best on a near-vegetarian diet.)
- Describe a time you were really glad to get the help of an expert
- Describe a time when following expert advice led to trouble.
- Describe your style when making decisions.
- How do you decide if a course you have chosen is or is not working for you?
- What have been your best sources of wisdom on your path to a healthier life?

***Ideas for Next Steps:***

- Experiments and Observations:
- Do a thought experiment: Imagine you will soon make an important decision. What steps will you need to go through to arrive at the best possible decision in the current circumstances?
- Do a thought experiment: Imagine you will soon make a decision that will affect a health outcome for you or someone who is important to you. Notice what information you are getting from your gut and your mind.
- Do this experiment with someone safe: Engage in a discussion with someone who is a model for you in terms of lifestyle and wellness. Ask this person to describe his or her process for making decisions and take notes for your journal.
- Do this experiment on your own: Once you have a basic understanding of your decision-making style, use your own steps to make a decision about a change you are contemplating.

***Between Meetings:***

- Just start noticing when you truly need the advice of an expert and when your internal expert is up to the task.
- Next time you do need the help of an expert, prepare. Go in with questions for the doctor, for example, or questions you’ve researched before speaking to a contractor.