



Week 3 Toolkit • Family Version

Family Boundaries & Personal Space

IAETDAA | International Association for the Development of Art Therapy and Arts-Based Healing

May Family Therapy Month · Healing Through Art, Drawing Closer to Each Other

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1. This Week at a Glance

Core Question: Where can I be myself?

This Week's Goals:

Identify boundary issues in your home (who often "crosses the line"? who often "hides"?)

Learn to protect your own space

Respect each family member's independent territory

Core Golden Saying:

Boundaries are not walls - they are doors. You may enter, but please knock first.

Keywords: Knock · Alone Time · "I Need"

2. What Are Family Boundaries? (3-Minute Read)

Family boundaries, simply put, are: **What is mine, what is yours, and what is ours.**

Three Types of Family Boundaries (See Which One Fits Your Family)

Type	Behavior	Healthy?
Diffuse Boundaries	No privacy, emotional enmeshment, lack of separateness	✗ Too close
Rigid	Living separate lives, lack of care,	✗ Too distant

Type	Behavior	Healthy?
Boundaries	no expression	
Clear Boundaries	Intimate but respectful, individual autonomy respected	✔ Ideal

Common Signs of Family Boundary Issues

Intrusive Type (Boundaries too diffuse):

Entering rooms without knocking

Taking things without asking

Unable to say no to family requests

"If you're not happy, I'm not allowed to be happy either"

Disengaged Type (Boundaries too rigid):

Everyone stays in their own room

Don't ask for help when facing difficulties

Rarely say "I love you" or "I'm struggling"

Polite like strangers

3. This Week's Activities (For the Whole Family)

Activity 1: My Territory (20 minutes)

Materials: One sheet of paper per person, colored markers

Steps:

1. Draw your "territory"

Use a shape to represent your personal space (circle, house, castle, planet – anything works)

Inside the shape, draw what you want to be "yours" (quiet, privacy, choice, alone time...)

2. Mark the "entry rules"

Draw doors or windows on the boundary

Use colors to indicate: Who can enter? When? Is knocking required?

3. Take turns sharing

"This is my territory. What I value most is..."

"This is how I want my family to treat my territory..."

4. Discussion Questions:

Is your territory respected at home?

When do you feel your "territory" has been invaded?

How would you like your family to treat your territory?

Activity 2: Boundary Thermometer (10 minutes)

Materials: One large sheet of paper with a large thermometer drawn on it (0–100 degrees), one colored marker per person

Steps:

1. Each person marks their "boundary comfort level"

0 degrees: No boundaries at all, feeling overwhelmed

50 degrees: Balanced boundaries and connection – just right

100 degrees: Completely closed off, feeling isolated

2. Discuss different scenarios

"When parents enter my room without knocking, my temperature is ____"

"When no one at home pays attention to me, my temperature is ____"

"When we eat and talk together, my temperature is ____"

💡 Core value: Transform boundary issues from "who is right or wrong" to "is everyone comfortable?" – adjust together to a range where no one feels uncomfortable.

Activity 3: Three Small Things (One Week Practice)

Do these three small things every day this week:

#	Practice	How to Do It
1	Knock before entering	Even if the door is open, knock anyway
2	30 minutes of uninterrupted time	Give yourself 30 minutes each day. Tell your family: "I need some time alone"
3	Say "I need..."	Replace "Don't you..." with "I need..."

Phrase Examples:

- "I need ten minutes of quiet"
 - "I need you to knock before entering my room"
 - "I need to be alone for a while – I'll be back in 30 minutes"
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Activity 4: Family Boundary Declaration (15 minutes)

Materials: One large sheet of paper, colored markers, stickers

Steps:

1. Each person writes three of their "boundary rules"

For example: "Please knock before entering my room"

"Please ask before borrowing my things"

"When I'm angry, please let me be alone for a while"

2. Family discussion

Which rules does everyone agree on?

Which ones need adjustment?

What happens if someone violates a rule?

3. Sign and post

Post the final version on the refrigerator or in the living room

Everyone signs / adds their handprint

Template:

Our Family Boundary Agreement

Knock before entering someone's room - wait for a response before entering.

Ask before borrowing someone else's belongings.

Everyone gets 30 minutes of "uninterrupted time" each day.

When someone says "I need to be alone for a while," others respect it.

During arguments, no bringing up the past and no personal attacks.

Signatures: _____

Activity 5: Relay Drawing • Boundary Edition (20 minutes)

Rules: No talking, one stroke per person per turn, take turns

Theme: "My Space vs. Our Space"

Discussion after drawing:

1. Which parts of the drawing feel like "mine"? Which feel like "ours"?
2. Which stroke made you feel like "my territory was invaded"?
3. If you could add a door to this drawing, where would you put it?

4. This Week's Practice Cards (Printable)

Daily Check-In Table

Day	Did I knock?	30 minutes alone?	Did I say "I need"?
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Day	Did I knock?	30 minutes alone?	Did I say "I need"?
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Boundary Phrase Cards (Post on Refrigerator)

Setting boundaries:

"I need... (specific request)"

"When you... I feel... so I wish..."

"I need to be alone for a while. I'll be back in ___ minutes."

Responding to others' boundaries:

"Okay, I understand."

"Thank you for telling me that."

"I'll come back in ___ minutes."

5. Common Questions

Q: What if my child doesn't want to draw "My Territory"?

A: Don't force it. They can be an "observer" instead, or try again another day. Parents can draw and share first – when children feel safe, they may join in.

Q: What if family members aren't willing to participate?

A: Start with one person. You can knock first, you can state your need for alone time first – change often begins with one person.

Q: What if no one follows the Boundary Declaration after posting it?

A: Gently remind. Don't blame – just point to the declaration on the wall and say: "I think we forgot about this." Habits take time.

Q: What if my child is too young to understand boundaries?

A: Start with physical boundaries – "Your body belongs to you" / "You can say no if you don't want to be hugged." Expand to space and privacy as they grow older.

6. This Week's Golden Sayings

A healthy family doesn't lack boundaries – it has flexible boundaries.

Boundaries are not walls – they are doors. You may enter, but please knock first.

Keep yourself in intimacy; draw closer to each other in independence.

This Week's Healing Goals

- ✓ Identify boundary issues in your family (intrusion/disengagement)
 - ✓ Protect your own space and respect others' territory
 - ✓ Turn diffuse boundaries into clear ones, and rigid boundaries into warm ones
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Therapist Version (with clinical frameworks and intervention scripts): Free for IAETDAA members at www.iaetdaa.com/membership

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Healing begins with seeing.