



Understanding Boundaries

The best statement I ever heard describing healthy relationship boundaries is this:

“I have to be willing to be in a relationship, and I have to be willing to not be in a relationship.”

- Willing to be IN means:

- Willing to be OUT means:

Ironically, it is only the willingness to be in the relationship that allows me to feel safe enough to be fully involved in the relationship.

1. Change the locus of trust from others to oneself.

Love yourself enough to create your own safety. Other people are not the providers of your security. As an adult, you're not looking for someone you can trust absolutely. You acknowledge the margins of human failing and let go of expecting security. Trust yourself to be able to receive love and handle hurt, to receive trustworthiness and handle betrayal, to receive intimacy and handle rejection.

2. Ask directly for what you need.

Connect with your preferences and tell people what they are. If you don't tell them, how will they know? Declare your identity.

3. Observe others' behavior toward you. Take it as information without getting caught in their drama.

Stand in a self-proclaimed place in which you are separated from the influence of another's seductive or aggressive power. Then, you can open yourself to that intuitive sense that lets you know when a relationship has become hurtful, abusive, or invasive.

4. Maintain a bottom line.

You get to decide how much you will accept of what someone offers you or fires at you. Limit how many times you allow someone to say no, lie, disappoint or betray you before you will admit the painful reality and move on. Confront futureless relationships in which you continue to look for happiness where there is only hurt.

Boundaries vs. Control

1. Control is about what you want the other person to do or not to do. A boundary is about what you will do to take care of yourself.
2. The difference between attempting to control another and setting a boundary is whether the focus is on you (control) or on me (boundary).
3. A boundary is not a threat. It is taking a clear stand on which you are willing, able and determined to follow through, if need be.
4. Fundamental to the idea of boundaries is the concept that we all have choices. If the other person chooses not to respect your boundaries, you will need to state how you plan to respond (boundary action).
5. Setting a boundary has consequences for you as well as for the other party. When you set a boundary, you have a responsibility to do what you say you will do if that boundary is violated.

Control Statement

- I want you to stop getting drunk.

Boundary Statement

- I will not tolerate your being intoxicated around me or in our home.

Boundary Action Statement

- If you decide to drink, do not come home until you have sobered up.
- If you come to my house after drinking, I will ask you to leave.

Control Statement

- I want you to stop drinking and driving.

Boundary Statement

- I will not ride in the car with you if you have been drinking.

Boundary Action Statement

- If you are arrested for DUI, I will not pay your bail or legal bills.
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Control Statement

- I want you to stop shouting at me.

Boundary Statement

- I will not tolerate verbal abuse.

Boundary Action Statement

- If you speak to me or act in a manner that feels threatening to me, I will ask you to leave or I will go home.
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Control Statement

- I want you to stop sleeping with other men (women).

Boundary Statement

- I choose to be in a monogamous relationship.

Boundary Action Statement

- If I have a reason to believe that you are sexual with other persons, I will end the relationship with you.