



Principals of Boundaries

Boundaries are limits that you set in dealing with other people. Your boundary has been violated if someone does something to you that you choose not to tolerate. You can violate other people's boundaries just as they can violate yours. Parents are the initial model for their children's boundaries. Below are important areas in the makeup of your boundaries.

Boundaries About Respect

You deserve to be treated with respect.

When others don't respect you, you should try to get out of the situation.

You should respect other people's boundaries. When another says "NO!" you should not take it personally that a boundary has been set.

A way to respect another's boundaries is to ask for things nicely rather than demand them.

Boundaries About Trust

Your degree of trust determines how close or how far you set your boundaries with another person.

Your boundary may have to be rigid or flexible depending on how much you trust the other person.

You don't trust everyone the same amount, so each boundary will be different with each person.

You don't trust every person the same day to day (there may be red flags about something), so your boundary with an individual may need to be adjusted accordingly.

Responsibilities

You are responsible for maintaining your boundaries.

Others are responsible for maintaining their boundaries.

You can point out when others have improper boundaries, however you cannot fix it. Just because you don't fix it doesn't mean you don't care, it just means you respect them.

Caretaking crosses boundaries left and right. It robs the other person of growth and vital learning.

Others' struggle can be good for them; kids need to struggle to grow.

You are responsible to let other people struggle and hurt (if necessary) to help them reach their goals.

Space

Physical space

Different cultures have different customs as to how close another is when you interact with them.

Different cultures also have different customs as to when touching is appropriate.

Knowing when to hug and when to kiss is different for various cultures.

In the US, arms' length is a comfortable distance for most people. Any closer than arms' length, and the person may feel that you are violating their physical space. Covid impacted this as well.

In elevators, we often feel uncomfortable because we are closer than arms' length.

Emotional Space (Intimacy)

Letting someone in closer to share your personal emotions is being intimate. Letting down your mask is another way to put this.

People will ask you for help when and if they need it.

An emotionally loaded relationship results from overloading emotions at the beginning of a relationship.

Instead of being intimate or not intimate with another (all or nothing), you can adjust your intimacy depending on the person you're interacting with, the nature of the relationship, and how you feel with them.

Flexibility

Your boundaries can be different (flexible) for different people.

Some people don't ever put down their boundaries and show their true selves.

Your boundaries may be flexible for some and inflexible for others. How flexible your boundaries are depends on how much you trust the other person.



Signs of Unhealthy Boundaries

Conversationally

Telling more than you feel comfortable with later. Talking at an intimate level on the first meeting, without really knowing if the person is trustworthy. Fear of talking at all because you may say too much.

Relationships

Trusting too quickly or with anyone who reaches out. Becoming preoccupied with someone. Adapting your behavior and values to please others.

Sexuality

Being sexual when you didn't want to be. Being sexual for someone else, not yourself, such as doing sexual things you do not want to do.

Awareness

Not noticing when someone invades your boundaries. Not noticing when someone displays poor boundaries.

Interactions

Accepting food, gifts, touch, etc. that you don't want. Touching without asking. Lack of assertiveness and limit setting.

Personal Power

Letting others direct your life, make your choices, and determine your identity.

Expectations

Believing others can anticipate your needs. Expecting others to fulfill your needs automatically. Falling apart so someone will take care of you.

Self-Care

All forms of self-abuse, including addictions. Not stopping abuse done to you by others.

Examples of positive feelings, beliefs, and rules which comprise healthy boundaries:

Feeling – I feel pleased and happy with myself. I love myself.

Belief – I deserve respect, love and consideration. No one deserves to be abused. It is my right to determine who touches my body.

Personal Rules – My journal is my possession and is private. My car cannot be driven without my permission. I will not permit hitting, slapping, pushing or verbal abuse. I will have sexual relationships only when I choose.

More About Boundaries

The boundary marks or delineates the differences between me and others. Without boundaries, it would be hard to define myself. Without boundaries, I may not feel that I *have* a self. And without boundaries, I can't have a healthy self. So, by being aware of and having boundaries, I can better define and know myself, know that I have a self, and have a healthy self.

A key to my boundaries is *knowing my inner life*. My inner life includes my beliefs, thoughts, feelings, choices, decisions, wants, needs, sensations within my body, my intuitions, and even unconscious factors in my life. If I am unaware of or out of tune with my inner life, I can't know all of my boundaries and limits. When I am aware of my inner life, I can more readily know and communicate my boundaries.

People can be fixed in either few or no boundaries—boundarilessness—or the opposite: overly rigid boundaries. And they often flip-flop between these. If people focus so much of their attention outside of themselves, they tend to be less aware of their inner life, and thus less aware of their boundaries.

Without knowing my inner life and my boundaries, I am unable to know my True Self, and I am unable to protect my well-being and its integrity with boundaries.



My Personal Boundary Statements

Respect

I deserve respect.

- When others disrespect me, I will choose how to respond.
 - I will respect other people's boundaries.
 - When someone says "no" or sets a boundary with me, I will honor it.
 - I will not expect others to meet needs they have not agreed to meet.
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Trust

Trust begins with me.

- I define and communicate my own boundaries.
 - I trust myself to adjust my boundaries as situations and relationships change.
 - I am allowed to reevaluate what works for me.
 - When a boundary no longer serves me, I can modify it.
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Responsibility

I am responsible for my boundaries.

- Others are responsible for theirs.
 - I will express my needs and concerns respectfully.
 - I cannot control another person's choices.
 - I will allow others to define and communicate their own boundaries, even when I disagree.
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Caring

Caring does not require abandoning myself.

- I can be compassionate without sacrificing my well-being.
 - When others struggle, I can offer support without taking responsibility for their outcomes.
 - Growth often comes through discomfort, and I can allow others the dignity of their own learning process.
 - I can be present without trying to rescue.
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Physical Space

I respect physical boundaries—my own and others'.

- I ask before entering another person's space.
- When uncertain, I ask rather than assume.
- I recognize that comfort levels with touch, proximity, and affection vary from person to person.
- I will communicate my needs clearly and respect the needs of others.

Emotional Space

I am responsible for my emotions.

- I can support others without managing their feelings for them.
 - I will not take responsibility for emotions that are not mine.
 - I will express my emotions honestly and respectfully.
 - I will choose the level of emotional intimacy that feels appropriate for each relationship.
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Flexibility

Healthy boundaries are clear and adaptable.

- My boundaries may change as I grow.
 - Different relationships may require different boundaries.
 - I can adjust my boundaries thoughtfully rather than reactively.
 - I trust myself to make changes when needed.
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Closing Statement

My boundaries are not walls meant to keep people out. They are guidelines that help me live with integrity, respect, and connection. They protect my well-being while creating healthier relationships with others.