

Relationship Boundary Tool: Checkers Moves

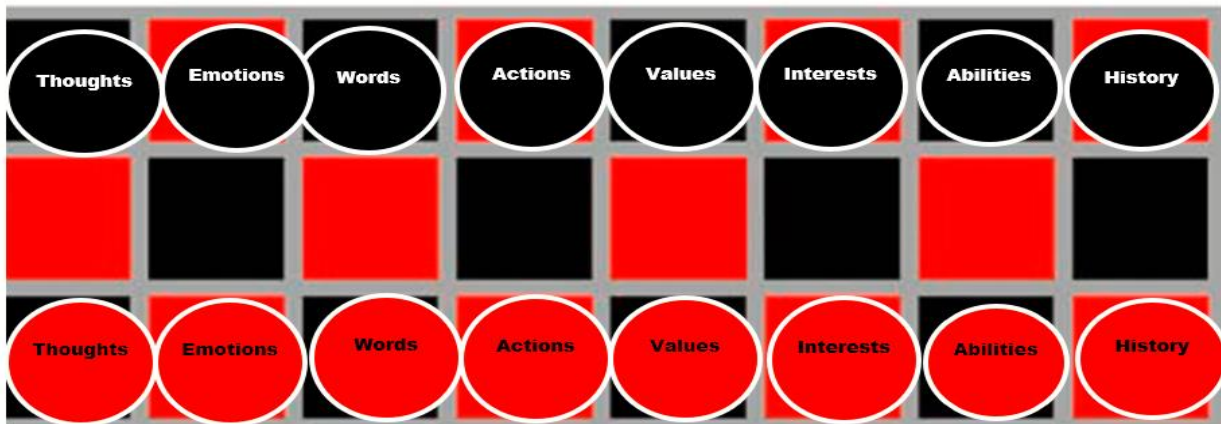
Popular culture has coined multiple analogies for relationship boundaries—

“Good fences make good neighbors.”

“Stay in your own lane.”

“You do you.”

This visual of a checkerboard and an analogy of playing a board game are another useful tool to understand what’s fair play as you look deeply into your patterns of interacting in relationships. If you can play checkers, you can easily learn how to set healthy relationship boundaries. You would never reach across the board and move another player’s checker, right? You understand that other adults have the right to maneuver their checkers, even if they do so in ways that you believe are silly or reckless. You also understand that you must play your own game, no one else can play it for you.



Just like checkers, relationship boundaries have rules. Boundaries help you understand what does and does not belong to you, what moves you have the right to make and what moves are off limits, or cheating.

Relationship Rules:

It’s not about BEING right, it’s about HAVING the right.

1. Every adult has their own set of checkers. (What belongs to them, their own boundaries.) Relationship boundaries, like the board game, begin by acknowledging the difference between what belongs to you, is your right and your responsibility, and what belongs to someone else, is their right and their responsibility. In this analogy, checkers represent everything that belongs to each person: **○Thoughts ○Emotions ○Words ○Actions ○Values ○Interests ○Abilities ○History.**

2. Your checkers belong to You:

○ You have thoughts inside of your head and you make choices about your thoughts. (*Your thoughts are your move. NO ONE ELSE DECIDES FOR YOU OR CONTROLS WHAT YOU THINK.*)

○ **You are responsible for your own emotions** (*NO ONE MAKES YOU FEEL ANYTHING. Others may trigger your emotions, but your emotions, inside of your body, belong to you. Another person's emotions are their "checker".*)

○ **You select your own words** (*Your voice belongs to you. It's your checker.*)

○ **You are responsible for your actions and inactions.** (*NO ONE MAKES YOU DO ANYTHING. Another's action may trigger your reaction... but your actions are your checkers*)

○ **Checkers are adaptive and fluid.** You have the right to evolve and grow at your own pace, Although some details of your life story are facts, your perceptions, interpretations and life lessons learned will evolve based on levels of insight and resilience.

3. No blaming allowed. Each person is responsible for their own checkers.

4. You are only allowed to strategize and move your own checkers. Unsolicited advice about someone else's checkers is called nagging. Even when you *think* you are right, you don't *have the right*.

5. No "Shoulding" on people. Because each person has the right to their own thoughts, emotions, and values, you are cheating when you "should" on others. Notice their moves, then strategize your response.

Playing Tips: For best results, use the Emotional Onion tool, 27 Rights tool, Good to Know file and Reasonable Expectations Tools.

1. To avoid cheating, ask yourself: "Whose checker is this? Who owns this problem? Whose move is it?" If you spend a lot of mental energy thinking about other people's lives, you can even ask, "**whose checkerboard is this?**"

Your parent's relationship with each other, your siblings' relationships with your parents, your adult children's relationships with their other parent or with each other... ALL OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT ON YOUR CHECKER BOARD.

2. Doing nothing, including avoidance and procrastination are all moves.

3. Mistakes are expected and part of the game, you are allowed to learn and grow, offering the same respect to other players. Learning and growth requires the ability to notice mistakes, take corrective action and offer apologies. Use the Healthy Trust Tool to help with this.

4. Mature adults can be told no without throwing a tantrum. Just sayin.