

Setting Boundaries

by Johns Hopkins HealthCare Solutions

What are Boundaries?

Boundaries are guidelines or limits you create to establish reasonable and safe ways for others to behave around you. Boundaries let others know how you want to be treated and help you feel secure.

Setting boundaries creates clear expectations on the behaviors you accept from other people and what they can expect from you.



Increase Your Awareness

It's important to have a clear understanding of your boundaries and know how to effectively communicate them. This awareness can avoid hurt feelings, limit your exposure to stress and protect your well-being.

When boundaries are not maintained, it can lead to feelings of resentment, anger, frustration and disappointment. If you don't address these emotions, they can negatively affect you and your relationships.

Types of Boundaries

You can set boundaries around:



Your **personal space** and **privacy**



How you spend your **time** and **energy**



The **emotions** and **thoughts** you share with others



How you spend your **money**

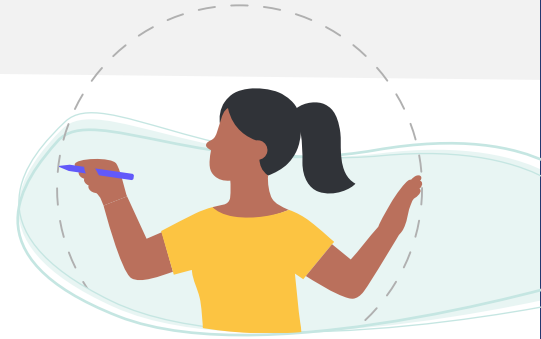
How to Set Boundaries

The ideal time to set boundaries is at the start of a new relationship. If you need to set boundaries in an existing relationship, it can seem difficult at first. It's understandable if you feel anxious, afraid or guilty for setting them.

Here are some steps you can take to set healthy boundaries.

Identify your boundaries.

Figure out what you need and what's important to you. This will help you determine if your boundary should be negotiable or non-negotiable.



Be assertive, clear, calm and firm when letting others know about your boundaries.

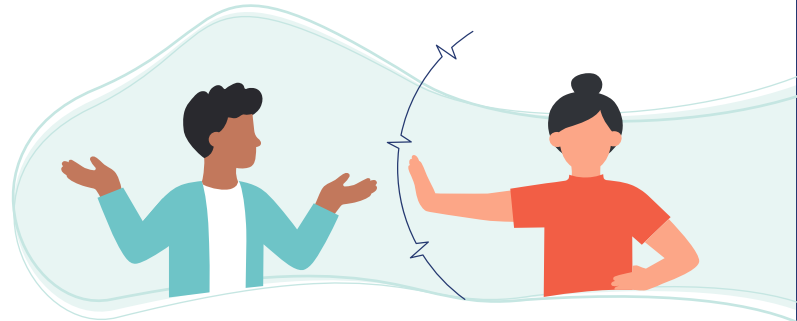
Use "I" statements to communicate your boundaries and share how you feel about what you need.

For example: "I felt hurt when you shared my personal information without my permission. What I need is for you to keep what I tell you confidential unless I explicitly ask you to share it with someone else."



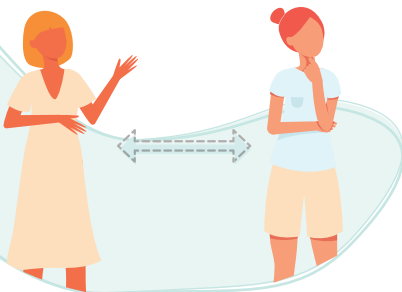
Enforce your boundaries.

It's essential to consistently enforce your boundaries. This sends the message that it's important to you and avoids confusion about any expectations.



Have a plan for what you'll do if your boundaries are not respected.

In some cases, you might need to distance yourself from people who don't respect your boundaries.



It takes time and practice to get better at setting and maintaining our boundaries. Remember that boundaries keep you safe, help preserve your self-esteem and self-respect and are necessary for creating healthy relationships.



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