



Learning to Set and Enforce Boundaries

Your Employee Assistance Program

- **How much will it cost?**

- Free!

- **Who qualifies for EAP services?**

- Employee
- Spouse or legal domestic partner
- Children up to age 26
- Legal dependents residing within the household

- **EAP Services**

- Nutritional Counseling
- Success and Life Coaching
- Smoking Cessation Program
- Legal and Financial Support
- Senior Care Services
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- The Behavioral Workshop
- Monthly MENTOR Newsletter
- Premier Partner Services
- Solution Focused Counseling Services
- Phone-Based Supportive Counseling and Crisis Services



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Objectives

- Review of what we mean by boundaries
- Types of boundaries
- What boundaries are vs. what they are not
- Strategies to enforce your boundaries
- Enforcing and maintaining boundaries with your job
- Using effective and mature communication to enforce your boundaries
- What to do if someone is not respecting your boundaries / someone tells you that YOU are not respecting their boundaries
- Healthy vs unhealthy boundaries
- The benefit of setting healthy boundaries

What Do We Mean By “Boundaries”

- “Boundaries” has become quite a buzz word nowadays
- But what does it mean?



Boundaries Are...

- A boundary is an imaginary line that separates me from you. They separate your physical space, your feelings, needs, and responsibilities from others. Your boundaries also tell other people how they can treat you – what's acceptable and what isn't.

"It is necessary, and even vital, to set standards for your life and the people you allow in it."

- Mandy Hale

Different Types Of Boundaries

- **Physical Boundaries**

- Refers to personal space and physical touch. Healthy physical boundaries include an awareness of what's appropriate, and what's not, in various settings and types of relationships

- **Intellectual Boundaries**

- Refers to thoughts and ideas. Healthy intellectual boundaries include respect for others' ideas, and an awareness of appropriate discussion

- **Emotional Boundaries**

- Refers to a person's feelings. Healthy emotional boundaries include limitations on when to share, and when not to share, personal information

Different Types Of Boundaries

- **Sexual Boundaries**

- Refers to the emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of sexuality. Healthy sexual boundaries involve mutual understanding and respect of limitations and desires between sexual partners

- **Material Boundaries**

- Refers to money and possessions. Healthy material boundaries involve setting limits on what you will share, and with whom

- **Time Boundaries**

- Refers to how a person uses their time. To have healthy time boundaries, a person must set aside enough time for each facet of their life such as work, relationships, and hobbies

Examples Of When Boundaries Are Violated

- **Physical Boundaries**

- May be violated when someone touches you when you don't want them to, or when they invade your personal space (ex. Rummaging through your bedroom)

- **Intellectual Boundaries**

- May be violated when someone dismisses or belittles another person's thoughts or ideas (ex. "Why would you think that?! That's so stupid!")

- **Emotional Boundaries**

- May be violated when someone criticizes, belittle, or invalidates another person's feelings (ex. "Stop crying. Suck it up and be a man.")

Examples Of When Boundaries Are Violated

- **Sexual Boundaries**

- May be violated with unwanted sexual touch, pressure to engage in sexual acts, leering, or sexual comments (ex. cases of sexual harassment/assault)

- **Material Boundaries**

- May be violated when someone steals or damages another person's possessions, or when they pressure them to give or lend them their possessions (ex. someone steals money from you, or a possession from your home)

- **Time Boundaries**

- May be violated when someone demands too much of one's time (ex. you took a day off of work but your job demands you work that day anyway)

Boundaries Are About

- **COMMUNICATION!**
- **LISTENING!**
- Trust
- Honesty
- Respect
- Trying to understand
- Patience
- Empathy

What Boundaries Are Not!

- Being rude to someone/being unnecessarily mean to someone
- Getting upset at someone for calling out your maladaptive behavior
- Saying no to everything in your life (it's about balance)
- Cutting everyone in your life off (this is maladaptive behavior)
- Getting upset at someone for disagreeing with you

Side Note: Boundaries Are Important to All Relationships

- A lot of people tend to think of boundaries as something that exists in just romantic relationships, this is not true
- Boundaries can exist in any sort of relationship you have with another person or a group of people including at school, work, and within families
- Boundaries for children are also often overlooked; many parents think that because they are the parent they can do what they want; again this is not true
- Respect is earned, if you want a child to respect your boundaries, you must respect theirs as well (ex. not sneaking into your child's phone to read their texts/journal, letting them have some privacy, respecting your child's emotions and not dismissing how they feel)
- Boundaries with work are also incredibly important, and something that unfortunately a lot of people do not have the privilege of using (ex. staffing issues, supervisors/management do not respect your boundaries, not fairly compensated, etc.)

How To Communicate Your Boundaries

- Take a deep breathe (setting boundaries can be anxiety provoking)
- Be assertive but not rude or malicious
- Keep a firm and strong voice, but make sure you come across as respectful
- Try to use “I Statements”
- It is okay to explain why you are enforcing a boundary
- There are also times where you might not feeling comfortable explaining why you’re setting a boundary – and that’s okay too

Navigating Boundaries With Work

- Establishing boundaries with your job can be really, really difficult
- There are a lot of factors outside of your control that can lead to feelings of being used and like your work boundaries are not being respected
- American work places are becoming more and more toxic, and demanding much more from their employees than they have in the past
- Because we are an EAP program, let's look at some tips to help you try to enforce and maintain boundaries at work

Navigating Boundaries With Work - Tips

- **Physical boundaries**

- Offer handshakes over hugs
- Don't attend any "work events" after 7 pm
- Take your after-lunch walk alone (maybe with your favorite podcast)
- Say no to working on the weekends
- Take your sick days and your mental health days.
- Have a "tell" to show other employees that you're busy (ex. wearing over-ear headphones or closing your door)

Navigating Boundaries With Work - Tips

- **Mental boundaries**

- Set your working hours—and stick to them
- Decline superfluous meetings (and encourage management to run more efficient meetings)
- Set away messages when engaged in deep work mode
- Do not engage in anything that can be perceived as gossip—especially about others in your workplace

- **Emotional boundaries**

- Communicate upfront how you like to give and receive feedback
- Do not imprint on someone else's bad mood or outburst
- Delegate work when necessary
- Create a schedule that prioritizes the balance in work-life balance

8 Ways to Establish Healthy Boundaries at Work

1. Assess Your Personal Boundaries First
2. Communicate Upfront
3. Create Clear Structures
4. Keep Your Relationships Professional
5. Delegate Work When Appropriate
6. Say No
7. (Actually) Take Time Off
8. Use Technology to Help

What About Work That Consistently Disrespects Your Boundaries?

- This is a tough one. There are a lot of people who rely on their job to pay the bills, keep a roof over their head, keep food on the table, and support their loved ones
- That being said, it's important to know your limits and communicate directly
- Plan a meeting with your boss to respectfully talk about the ways your boundaries have been violated, and the way it affects you and your work performance. Talk about actionable steps your job can take to support you
- Ultimately, if a job continues to disrespect your needs, it is possible you are working for a toxic workplace and might need to separate yourself from that environment. Of course, it should be said this is a privilege that many people don't have

What To Do If Someone Is Not Respecting Your Boundaries

- Decide whether this boundary is negotiable
- Write down what's happening
- Accept that some people will not respect your boundaries no matter what you do
- Practice loving detachment
- Consider limiting contact or going no-contact

What To Do If You Are Not Respecting Someone's Boundaries

- Breathe and listen
- Remind yourself that them saying “no” is not necessarily a reflection of you
- Clearly communicate and ask questions
- Accept what the other person is communicating
- Respect the autonomy of other people
- Continue to work on yourself

- L** = Look interested - get interested
- I** = Involve yourself by responding
- S** = Stay on target
- T** = Test your understanding
- E** = Evaluate the message
- N** = Neutralise your feelings

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Boundaries

Healthy	Unhealthy
Valuing your personal boundaries and not compromising them for someone else	Disrespecting the values, beliefs, and opinions of others who do not agree with you
Saying “no” and accepting when others say “no”	Not saying “no”, or not accepting when others say “no”
Knowing who you are and what you want, and communicating that to others	Feeling as though you are responsible for others people’s feelings and/or happiness
Engaging in appropriate sharing	Feeling like you are responsible for “fixing” or ”saving” another person
Not letting others define you or your sense of self-worth	Touching people without their permission, or when they have already said “no”
Knowing that your needs and feelings are just as important as the needs and feelings of others	Engaging in sexual activity without clear consent from the other person
Knowing that you have a right to your emotions and feelings	Letting other people define you or give your life meaning
Respecting others’ values, beliefs, and opinions while knowing that you do not have to compromise your own	Being unable to handle something just so someone can take care of it for you

Activity

- In your participant manual, we have an activity for you to think about your own personal boundaries. Using this activity, you will answer the following questions:
 1. I struggle setting boundaries with these people...
 2. I feel most angry when they...
 3. I struggle setting boundaries with them because...
 4. Specific actions I can do to set boundaries with them...

When finished, please feel free to share in the chat some of the actions you are going to take to set healthier boundaries for yourself!

Thank You!

