Setting Boundaries Guide

What are they and how to develop your own

Setting healthy limits, or boundaries, in our lives allows us to take care of our health and well-being. In this resource, we'll cover different types of boundaries, how to set them and ways to communicate to others what you will and will not tolerate to protect yourself and take charge of your life.

Type of Boundaries

Physical—Physical or spatial limits for yourself and others you interact with.

Emotional or mental—Limits on topics of discussion or validating our personal emotions through prioritizing our own needs.

Time—Limits on the amount of time you dedicate to people, activities and events.

Boundaries can look like...
- Not discussing topics that make you uncomfortable
- Not accepting hugs
- Only sharing personal information with trusted people
- Having a set bedtime or down time
- Reserving a time in your day for self-care
- Only holding hands with friends and loved ones

Setting Your Boundaries

Creating boundaries can be hard at first, but once you set them, it can help you feel less overwhelmed and develop closer and more trusting relationships.

It may take some time for those around you to adjust and they may need reminders, but it's important to stay true to your needs.

Step 1: Develop
Reflect on what habits or support makes you feel best. You can start with one boundary and work from there.

- *"I feel most successful when I don't respond to any messages or check my phone before 8 am. Therefore, I will be putting my phone on "do not disturb" until I'm ready to start the day."*
- "I feel most comfortable when I only talk about my personal struggles with my parents or therapist."
- "I only feel comfortable sharing my food with my friends and family."

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Step 2: Have a Conversation

Once you feel comfortable, discuss your boundaries with friends and loved ones. This can be its own conversation, or simply bring it up when one of your boundaries is mentioned. For example:

- "I care about you, but I don't feel comfortable discussing my body image. It's a sensitive topic for me."
- "I don't hug people I just met, but I'm comfortable with a handshake."
- "I can't come over at that time because that's when I have my self-care time."

Step 3: Implement

Implementation can take place as step two or three depending on how you feel. You can't prepare for every situation, but it will be good to think about your limits and potential exceptions.

- "I will dedicate 30 minutes every day to exercising. However, I understand that this may not be possible every day, so I will either lessen the amount of time or come up with an alternative."
- "I'll start by telling my friends I don't feel good when they joke about mental health. As I get more confident, I can bring this up more with others."
- "I'll talk to my dad about how we can work together to make time for each other because it makes me feel good when we have uninterrupted time together."

Step 4: Sustain

What's most important is to remain firm on your boundaries and where your exceptions are. Be kind to yourself and remember your "why."

- "I didn't feel confident sharing with that person that I don't feel good when they discuss politics. I'll try again the next time I talk with them because I feel uneasy after this topic is brought up."
- "I will inform my teacher that I don't feel comfortable when I am not given notice that we'll discuss gun violence in class."

Additional Tips

- Be assertive: Clearly and confidently communicate your boundaries.
- Use "I" statements: Express your feelings and needs without blaming others.
- Prepare to be challenged: Some people may test your boundaries. Stay firm and reiterate your needs.
- Be kind to yourself: It takes time to establish and maintain boundaries. Celebrate your progress!

Remember, setting boundaries is an ongoing process. It's about respecting your needs and communicating effectively.

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