

Mental Health Moment

Adult and Child Health

November 2021

What are Personal Boundaries?

Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. Our boundaries depend on the setting. For example, what's appropriate to say when you're out with friends might not be appropriate when you're at work.

Types of Boundaries:

Physical: Physical boundaries include your needs for personal space, your comfort with touch, and your physical needs like needing to rest, food, and water.

Intellectual: Intellectual boundaries refer to your thoughts, ideas, and curiosity.

Emotional: Emotional boundaries refer to a person's feelings, including limitations on when to share and when not to share personal information.

Material: Material boundaries refer to items/possessions like your home, car, clothing, jewelry, and money.

Time: Time boundaries refer to how a person uses their time, such as setting aside time for the different parts of their life like work, relationships, and hobbies.

Setting Healthy Boundaries

While the holidays can be a magical time of the year, spending time with family during the holiday season can also lead to significant amounts of stress. Family gatherings might mean spending time, energy, or money in ways that don't align well with our personal values. Our families may have different political views or religious beliefs, which can cause at minimum tension and discomfort. Taking time to set boundaries is essential to maintaining physical and emotional health. By recognizing the need to set and enforce limits, you protect your self esteem, maintain self-respect, and enjoy healthy relationships. Unhealthy boundaries result in significant emotional pain that can lead to dependency, depression, anxiety, and even stress-induced physical illness.

How do we set boundaries?

- If you feel anger, resentment, tension or taken advantage of, this may be an area where you need to set a boundary.
- When you identify the need to set a boundary, be clear, calm, firm, respectful, and concise .
- You do not have to justify, get angry, or apologize for the boundary you are setting.
- Remember, you are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful way.
- Some people might test your boundaries. Be prepared and be consistent.
- When setting new boundaries, you may feel selfish or guilty. Don't forget that you have a right to self-care.

Healthy Boundaries Around Holidays Sound Like:

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"I am going to head upstairs + get some quiet time"
(space boundaries)

"Let's not discuss this topic at tonight's dinner"
(topic boundaries)

"We won't be able to stay the night, but we are really looking forward to dinner"
(time boundaries)

"I am not eating 'x' right now but I appreciate you taking the time to make it"
(consumption boundaries)

How to Set a Boundary (turning down an invite)

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1 be gracious

"that sounds like an amazing time"

"I really appreciate you inviting me"

"I heard that new bar is really nice"

2 decline

"but I won't be able to make it"

do not offer an excuse or reason you can say NO without cause

3 work through discomfort

not offering an excuse will feel very scary and awkward but gets easier with practice

you have a right to NO

Sources:

MGB Relationships: <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/six-types-of-boundaries-and-what-healthy-boundaries-look-like-for-each>

Positive Psychology: <https://positivepsychology.com/great-self-care-setting-healthy-boundaries/>

Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/presence-mind/201508/4-ways-set-boundaries> and <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/presence-mind/201611/holiday-boundaries>

Infographics: @the.holistic.psychologist