



Boundaries: What's the Hype?





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In the simplest sense, boundaries are lines that define where one ends, and another begins. This can apply to physical land, as you would see on a map, and it also applies to how we personally interact with the world around us. You likely studied maps in school to see boundary lines between states and countries, but you probably didn't learn about personal boundaries! So, what are boundaries and why are they so important?

THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF BOUNDARIES, INCLUDING:

Physical boundaries

- ✦ Touch and physical space

Intellectual boundaries

- ✦ Thoughts and ideas

Emotional boundaries

- ✦ Emotions and feelings

Sexual boundaries

- ✦ All aspects of one's sexuality

Material boundaries

- ✦ Possessions and money

Time boundaries

- ✦ How an individual uses their time, when, and in which order.



Boundaries can be rigid, loose, or healthy. People with very rigid boundaries might find that they avoid intimacy and close relationships, struggle to ask for help, and are very protective of their personal information. This can lead to isolation, social disconnection, loneliness, and excess stress.

In contrast, those with a lack of boundaries often overshare personal information, struggle to say no, depend on others excessively, and accept poor treatment. Some signs that someone may struggle with a lack of boundaries are finding themselves in abusive/exploitative relationships, abandoning one's own values for the values of another, becoming resentful due to not feeling as if they can say "no", and having an intense fear of rejection.

Healthy boundaries fall somewhere in between these two extremes. People who have healthy boundaries find that they value their own opinions, know, and communicate personal wants and needs, accept when others say “no”, and share personal information appropriately.

It is important to note that boundaries are essential for people of all ages and stages, and they will fluctuate and change throughout the lifespan. Boundaries vary based on the context, meaning you might have healthy boundaries at home, while having too few boundaries at work. Boundaries also vary between relationships.

Boundaries help young people to feel cared for and safe. Boundaries also help parents care for themselves, their children, and their family at large by communicating clear limits and safety. Setting family boundaries can be challenging and new skills may be needed to negotiate healthy working boundaries with adolescents.

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