

HOW TO SET BOUNDARIES

A Guide on What to Expect and How to Prepare

1. REFLECT: Take some time to reflect on what your true feelings and emotions are in certain situations.

- What makes you stressed?
- What makes you uncomfortable?
- What makes you anxious or scared?
- What makes you sad or hurts your feelings?
- What are your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual limits?

***Note:** When you take time to reflect on these questions you will get a better understanding of what you are not okay with and where your boundaries should be. When you do not understand where you end and someone else begins you can start to experience feelings of Resentment and Discomfort. This is a key indicator that the boundaries in place are not healthy. Resentment typically results from feeling that we are being taken advantage of and not being respected. And when we feel uncomfortable in a situation, that is a sign that a line may have been crossed by us or by someone else.*

2. WHY DONT WE HAVE BOUNDARIES?: For a lot of us we may not have been taught about boundaries growing up or what we were taught was not healthy (ex: no boundaries, enmeshed, too strict of boundaries). When this is what we are taught or not taught, as an adult it can be hard to develop friendships, relationships, maintain a job, feel respected or valued by others, feel recognized for the work that we do, ect. The list goes on. There are so many ways that this can affect us without us even realizing that this is the problem. When we grow up in our family/friend bubble, we think that what we know and how we were raised is normal. This often changes when we bring a significant other into our family dynamics.
3. BE DIRECT: In order to maintain or establish boundaries we need to be direct and clear in what our boundaries are, with others and with ourselves. Some people may naturally respect boundaries and not need to be explicitly told, others may need to be confronted in order to respect our boundaries. If we are not used to having boundaries and are just beginning this process it may be more difficult. The people in our life are used to us not having boundaries and will most likely push back on those new boundaries. We need to be prepared to defend our boundaries and be able to stand up for ourselves.
4. INVEST IN MULTIPLE PEOPLE: The healthiest people tend to feel that they have options (multiple sources of encouragement and people who care about them). This is key to maintaining boundaries. Do not put all your eggs in one basket. When this

happens we tend to rely too heavily on that one basket, option or person. That is way too much to ask of one person, to meet all of our needs, as well as unhealthy. We need MULTIPLE baskets, options and people in our lives to get our needs met and be able to maintain and develop healthy relationships with each. **Note:** *In abusive relationships you will often see that the victim is isolated by the abuser because of this very thing. When the victim has no one else to go to, no other options, they will put up with so much more. When we feel that we have options and that other people want us or value us, it is much easier to value and respect ourselves. If we feel that we are not valued, respected or that no one wants us, then it is much more likely that we will give in, drop our boundaries and let others walk all over us in order to “maintain” the one or few relationships that we have. Repeated violation of boundaries, an ongoing feeling of disrespect, being unwanted, and feeling worthless or invisible can lead to trauma.*

5. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?: This is absolutely terrifying, I know! When you think about it you may not have any friends who treat you well or respect your boundaries. What will happen when you start to put boundaries in place or enforce current ones? Will they reject you? Make fun of you? Be upset at you, push back or confront you about it? I agree, that is terrifying to think about. Especially if you do not have anyone else to fall back on. **Note:** *If you think they are going to respond any one of the ways I just listed out, are they really your friend? Do they really care about you and treat you well? A healthy relationship requires mutual respect. Food for thought.*
6. WHERE TO FIND PEOPLE WHO WILL TREAT YOU WELL: Join interest groups, support groups, online support forums, find a hobby, make time for yourself, and discover things that you love to do. It is important to invest in yourself in order to develop confidence and self-love. When we find things that we are passionate about we start to develop a healthier sense of self and respect for ourselves. In turn, when we feel this way, we will attract people who also respect and love us.
7. TAKE COURAGE: Like any new skill it takes time to learn and develop in order to get good at it. We start small when we lift weights or exercise but gradually grow stronger and stronger and are able to lift more! Setting boundaries is scary! It takes courage, confidence, and support from others. But over time you get better at it and will feel more confident in your abilities. As well, over time you will find that you are surrounded by people who respect your boundaries and value you for who you are, because of those boundaries.

