

An Introduction to Healthy Boundaries



Boundaries in relationships keep us safe, autonomous, and healthy. They include physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, intellectual, and digital boundaries

Boundaries show the other person what we are comfortable with and how we want to be treated. Boundaries allow both us and the other person to flourish and thrive and helps us to honour and meet each other's feelings and needs.

Boundaries are our full body, heart, and mind yes or no.



Here's an exercise or two to try...



You will need:

- A mirror
- Pen
- Notebook
- A space to stand and reflect.



Sometimes our lives are so busy and perhaps we are used to caring for others that we forget to always notice what makes us feel comfortable and safe.

Becoming Aware

Becoming aware of our boundaries. For a month start to notice how you feel and react when you are around people, in situations, locations, buildings and when you watch films or TV programmes. Note down when you feel uncomfortable and when you feel at ease. This will help you to become aware of where your boundaries need to be set.

Developing our non-negotiables.

To be clear on a firm no look at the list of those things, people or situations which cause you discomfort and especially feelings of unsafety. Stand up and feel how your body reacts to the thought of being put back into the situation again. If there is muscle tension, pain, constriction, racing heart, anxiety, or stomach discomfort you are starting to get in touch with your absolute nos.



Practising saying no.

For one month each day look in the mirror and then look yourself directly in the eyes and say no 5 times. Just feeling the word no coming out of our mouth and hearing our voice saying it is empowering.

Creating Boundaries

Now you may have discovered where some boundaries are, here are some top tips to help implement and maintain them.



Boundaries can change and that is ok.
Boundaries are up for reassessment at any time.
As we change and grow so do our needs and wants.



Setting boundaries can be difficult when we first try and require plenty of practise. It's easier to first start setting some boundaries with those who will be kind and understand us and build your confidence until we can set effective boundaries for more difficult situations.



Nonviolent communication (NVC). To reduce friction and potential conflict in relationships when boundaries are being set or discussed consider communication using the NVC model (created by Marshall Rosenberg). Expressing ourselves using this formula; 'I observe ...', 'I feel ...', 'I need ...', 'I appreciate this is a change for you. Would you be willing to ...'?

Practise boundaries with ourselves. Implement boundaries around our own self-care, behaviour, and language. We are continuously modelling good boundary setting for those we are in relationships with. We teach people how to treat us.

Giving with a full heart is a wonderful feeling, when people in our lives understand and respect our boundaries it allows us to give more fully. We can then steer our lives in the course that we really choose to go.

Useful links to find out more.

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/>

