

# Boundaries

*“Personal boundaries define you as an individual. They are statements of what you will or won’t do, what you like and don’t like, how far you will or won’t go, how close someone can get to you or how close you will get to another person . . . they are your value system in action.”*

Boundaries are a way of holding the people in our life accountable to treating us in the ways that we need them to. It can be as simple as “I don’t want to talk about this right now” or can be protective, “You are not allowed to touch my body in that way.” Boundaries, when respected or violated, give us important information about who we can and cannot trust in our life.

## **Boundary Myths:**

1. *Boundaries are destructive and mean.*

There’s a fantastic quote, “The people who get upset when you set a boundary are usually the ones who need your boundaries the most.” That pretty much says it all. Nobody gets to decide what is acceptable to you except you. If someone is trying to tell you differently, that’s generally a pretty strong red flag.

2. *Everyone sets the same boundaries.*

No two boundaries are alike, just as no two people are alike. What may be acceptable for one person may be intolerable for another person. You do not need to justify your boundary to someone who chooses to operate differently in their own life.

3. *Boundaries hurt relationships.*

Boundaries are one of the healthiest things we can do for any type of relationship in our life. From setting boundaries with our kids (which in turn teaches them how to treat others) to setting boundaries with friends and loved ones, we are telling the people in our life what we need to feel safe, respected, and loved. If your relationship is hurt by asking to be safe and supported, this is important information to consider when deciding whether or not to stay.

## **Five Steps to Healthier Boundaries**

1. *Be clear.*

What is the specific outcome you want from setting this boundary?

2. *Be realistic.*

The only person you can change is yourself. You may not be able to stop someone from acting a certain way, but you can change the way you respond to it and stop tolerating that behaviour. (e.g. your mom may not stop calling you at work, but you can stop picking up while at work)

3. *Communicate.*

A boundary not stated is a failed boundary. Be kind and respectful, but firm when communicating new boundaries to the people in your life.

4. *Be consistent and give feedback.*

If your boundary is not being respected, speak up and enact consequences if necessary.

5. *Give yourself permission to step away when boundaries are repeatedly ignored.*

You are the author of your own life and deserve to be treated in the way you ask. Period.