



Boundaries

WORKBOOK



What are boundaries and why are they an important piece of our mental well-being?

Boundaries are guidelines and limits that define reasonable, safe, and permissible ways for us to interact with others and how they act and talk to us. These guidelines also define how we will respond when someone crosses these limits.

Below are the Six Types of Boundaries and descriptions/examples of each. In the space provided, write 1-2 sentences describing how the type of boundary correlates to your three set of values: individual, organizational, and cultural.

Time: understanding your priorities, not overcommitting, set aside time; being demanded of, being late/keeping people late, contacting when asked not to

Physical: your need for personal space, comfort with touch, physical needs; receiving unwanted touch, being denied physical needs (breaks/water etc.), someone in your space, coming into your office or space uninvited

Sexual: consent, agreement, respect, understanding preferences, privacy; no consent, pressure, lying, criticism about preferences

Emotional: respecting and honoring feelings and energy. Recognizing your energy level, acknowledging what you can take on; dismissing/criticizing feelings, emotional dumping, asking inappropriate questions, trust



Intellectual: respect for ideas; yours, and others; sexism, racism, xenophobia, being shut down, dismissed, belittled

Material: what you can/cannot share, how your items are treated; when things are overused, destroyed, use possessions as a tool for control

▶ **Setting a boundary:** when we set boundaries we create realistic expectations, safeguard time, energy, and purpose, and further define our individuality.

When beginning to develop boundaries, remember to:

- Stay simple: don't overexplain, state the need plainly
- Start small: do not try and "fix" everything with one overcomplex boundary
- Set them early: identify areas of interest early on and set boundaries accordingly

Utilize the following steps to set a boundary:

Define: identify and define your boundary; these come from our values and priorities

Self-reflection: what's going on that needs a boundary; our experiences, skill sets, expertise, energy, insight, and perspective have value. When we value ourselves and our time, energy, skills, and expertise we are more particular about what we take on and what we let drop



Communicate: say what you need; answer the who, when, where, what, and why the boundary needs to be set

- ▶ **Maintaining a boundary:** once boundaries are set, it is important to our mental well-being that we honor them.
 - Be consistent: letting them slide can create confusion, or encourage new expectations and demands
 - Set consequences: say why it is important; when a boundary is crossed it needs to be reset or communicated more clearly
 - Bring up a boundary violation right away, in real time: clearly state the ways in which you are seeking to maintain the boundaries to ensure support for self, team, and organization; this communicates confidence in your message and respect for others

- ▶ **Crossing a boundary:** this can occur in both directions; someone can cross a boundary you've set, and you can cross a boundary set by someone else.

Record the boundary violations and your response:

- Take time to visualize and decide how to respond
- Check for weak spots or unsuccessful attempts at boundaries
- What are the consequences associated with this boundary?

Assess the experience internally:

- What role did I and others play in this boundary violation?
- How am I and how are others not respecting my boundaries?
- Was my boundary clearly stated?
- Is this boundary negotiable?
- Restate your boundary
 - ▶ They might not have understood – don't expect others to hold your boundaries for you



▶ **Crossing another's boundary:** take time to consider the potential impact of crossing the boundary.

- Discuss what happened and why
 - ▶ How did your actions affect them?
 - ▶ Accept their feelings
 - ▶ Attempt to remain open and not get defensive
- Define new boundaries or clarify the parameters of the established boundary and respect them
- Move forward with an understanding of the boundary from both parties