

Tips for Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves in relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others, but they’re also comfortable with closeness and intimacy.

Give yourself permission to say “no.”

Saying “yes” out of mere obligation is a recipe for resentment. Saying “no”—when that’s how you feel—is a superpower, because it shows you respect yourself and others enough to be honest.

Communicate assertively.

When it’s time to set a boundary, do so with confidence. State your needs respectfully, but without ambiguity. If you expect pushback, practice how you’ll respond in advance. Keep it short and sweet, avoiding long explanations or justifications.

Pay attention to strong emotions.

If you notice feelings of discomfort or resentment, acknowledge them. Sometimes strong emotions are a sign that a boundary hasn’t been respected. For example, you may feel angry if you keep making decisions that don’t honor how you feel.

Tailor boundaries to the situation.

Boundaries need to flex based on your level of energy, comfort, and trust. To make healthy choices, ask yourself what feels right with *this* person, in *this* situation, at *this* time.

Expand your comfort zone.

Having healthy boundaries isn’t just about saying “no.” You also have to let in new people, experiences, and ideas. This means relaxing your boundaries when there’s a good opportunity to learn, grow, or have an amazing experience.

Use your values as a compass.

Healthy boundaries should reflect and protect the things that matter most to you. Define your three or four highest priorities, so you can make decisions that serve these values. For example, if family is very important, you might put stricter limits on work hours.