

BOUNDARY TIP SHEET

Identify a boundary you want to set.

-How do you know you need a boundary?

-What gets in the way or makes it hard to communicate your needs?

1. State the boundary.

- State what you need. Keep it short. You do not need to offer explanations or justifications.
- Practice saying what you want to say before you say it, so you are clear, concise, and confident. Practice standing up and in front of a mirror (if you really want a confidence boost, do this with your arms stretched over your head!).

2. State the consequences if the boundary is not respected (be realistic and choose consequences you WILL follow through with).

Examples:

I won't answer my phone.

I won't bring my kids around.

I will only be able to see you when other people are around.

I won't be able to see you until you have paid your bill.

3. Be prepared to deal with hard feelings on your side (guilt, confusion, uncertainty) AND hurt feelings on their side (anger, denial, etc.).

Ways to prepare:

- Seek support from friends, family, coworkers, therapist, or group! Your support system can help you *gather* your confidence before setting a boundary and help you *maintain* it.

- If you are feeling guilty, identify what type of guilt you are feeling.
 - Appropriate Guilt:** *I have done something wrong and should work to make amends or repair the damage.*
 - Inappropriate Guilt:** *I haven't done something wrong but feel guilty anyway.* Usually, this type of guilt is our Attach part(s) expressing concern about our safety or anticipating danger. How can you connect with this part of you to reassure it you are ok in this moment?

- Practice acceptance of hard feelings. Make room for hard feelings rather than pushing them away or judging yourself. It is ok for them to be there and you can make room to feel them without responding from them. Often this acknowledgment and willingness to experience them decreases their intensity.
 - Acceptance Exercise?*

- Practice acceptance of others' limitations. Some people will be unable and/or unwilling to meet your boundary. Check your expectations and see if they are realistic based on past behavior (not words). Remember, trust is deserved by being earned over time. What do you know about this person's past behavior and abilities? Prepare yourself for what is realistic.

- You are responsible for your feelings and behavior. You can control how you set boundaries and do this in a respectful and clear way. You are **not** responsible for how other people respond to your boundaries. If they have hurt feelings, have difficulty accepting your boundary, or are angry—that is on THEIR side of the fence and their responsibility!
 - This goes against how Attach part(s) have been protecting us; Attach works hard to keep our environment safe by trying to manage and anticipate other people's mood and behavior. This is usually done by sacrificing our needs (stay small, don't have needs, people please, be perfect. *"If I am good enough, they will love me/won't hurt me."*).
 - Be ready for your Attach part(s) to be scared about you standing up for yourself.

Tips for dealing with challenging folk: STAY MINDFUL

Keep your focus on your objectives in the situation

Maintain your position

Don't be distracted on to another topic

Two helpful techniques for staying mindful:

1. Broken Record

Keep asking, saying no or expressing your opinion...over and over and over

You just don't have to think up something new each time, just keep saying the exact same thing. Keep a mellow tone of voice....your strength comes from maintaining your position

- You do not need to justify or explain your boundary. Just state it, over, and over, and over, and over with the exact same words, and in a calm tone of voice.
- You are not responsible for how someone responds to your boundary. People who are used to manipulating you or getting what they want from you will likely not like your boundary. That is ok! They are responsible for their feelings and behavior, just like you are responsible for yours.

2. Ignore

If the other person attacks, threatens or tries to change the subject,IGNORE, the threats comments or efforts to divert you. Just keep making your point. If you respond to these attacks, you have allowed the other person to take control of the situation

If you want to deal with the attacks...deal with them in another discussion.

Books for Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries Where You End And I Begin: How To Recognize And Set Healthy Boundaries

by Anne Katherine M.A.

Boundaries in Marriage

by Henry Cloud, John Townsend

Boundaries in Marriage Workbook

by Henry Cloud, John Townsend

The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships

by Harriet Lerner