



Setting Boundaries Worksheet

A boundary is a personal limit that respects your personal space and well-being. We all have a personal right to have and maintain boundaries. Boundaries will vary greatly from one person to the next, and depend on the individual's values and level of comfort in different scenarios.

For example, one person may welcome physical touch in the workplace, whereas another will not. One person may be okay with telling their personal life story at work, and another person may be guarded and secretive. Both perspectives are fine as long as they honor the personal space of the individual.

Personal space is physical, mental, and emotional.

When a boundary is crossed, this means your limit or space has been invaded or crossed. When you learn to respect our own personal space by maintaining clear and healthy boundaries, you are more at peace in your day-to-day life.

It's each person's responsibility to know, honor and respect their own boundaries. If you don't know what your boundaries are, other people won't know either. We are all entitled to have and maintain our own personal boundaries. We don't need to explain to others why we have certain boundaries, just the simple fact that we desire them is reason enough.

This activity will help you identify and set your own healthy boundaries.

1) Identify crossed boundaries.

When you feel uncomfortable, confused, angry, tense, stressed, sad, upset etc. about someone else's actions (or lack thereof), this may be a sign that someone has crossed a boundary that you didn't know you had. If you've felt uncomfortable in a past situation, you can go back and identify any areas where a boundary was crossed.

Identify any areas where your boundaries have been crossed. Where have you felt like you let someone do something that you were not okay with? When/where have you said yes, when you really meant to say no?

Start with the most uncomfortable feelings you can recall in the recent past, and try the following journal prompt:

When [explain what happened], I felt _____. I needed _____.

E.g., When the biomom called me last week to change the pick-up time, I felt confused about what to tell her, out of place, and uncomfortable. I told her okay, but I wasn't really sure because I didn't talk to my



partner about it. I needed time and space to think it over and get back to her, but I felt rushed to answer right away.

How could you have approached the situation differently in a way that honored your personal space?

In the above example, she needed time and space. Time and space boundaries were crossed. A good umbrella reaction that works in these uncomfortable situations is “Let me think about that and get back to you” or “I’ll think about that and get back to you soon”.

2) Identify recurring situations where you need to set a boundary.

Sometimes we are placed in an uncomfortable situation repeatedly where our boundaries are crossed. This is a great opportunity to practice boundary setting.

When the space (physical, emotional, mental) between you and the other person is correct and appropriate, your negative feelings will subside.

Identify what is happening, how you feel, and what you will do to restore the space. Take an example of a boundary that is being crossed, and come up with as many possible outcomes as you can think, so that you are ready to act and set the boundary.

E.g., Everytime my ex-husband calls me and makes a change of schedule demand, I immediately accept it as inevitable, then feel bad about it afterwards.

Try the following journal prompts:

If _____ happens, I will _____ in order to respect my personal space.

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Eg., If he makes a demand for a schedule change, I will tell him that I will check my schedule and get back to him. I will not say okay no problem. If he insists that I agree right away, I will say “I can’t do that right now, but I’ll get back to you as soon as possible give me a few minutes/hours etc.” If he asks why, I will respect my privacy and tell him again that I need to check my schedule and get back to him.

Notice that you don’t need to explain to others WHY you are setting a boundary. You don’t need a reason. Just the simple fact that you desire it is reason enough. When you start to explain or over-explain yourself and your need for a boundary, that leaves space for others to undermine your reasons. You don’t need to justify your reasons. The fact that you have them is reason enough.

You can learn set boundaries with assertiveness and love. It takes practice, and you’ll get better with time. Be gentle with yourself as you learn and grow in this new arena of life. If you weren’t taught healthy boundaries as a child, you can learn yourself, it’s never too late. When you learn to set healthy boundaries, you are modelling that behavior for you children to follow suite.