

74

Boundaries: Types, Phrases & Practice

One combined boundaries handout — the six types of personal boundary (physical, intellectual, emotional, sexual, material, time), a bank of short boundary phrases, and a longer set of prompts for responding or role-playing real situations.

6 boundary types

39 phrases

35 practice prompts

How to use this handout

- Start with Section 1 to name which kind of boundary the client is struggling with; most people find one or two types much harder than the rest.
- Section 2 is for the moment — short lines the client can memorise. Section 3 is for rehearsal — longer scripts to adapt and role-play in session.
- Pairs with the Emotional Manipulation and Cycle of Resentment handouts; unset boundaries sit underneath both.

1

What Are Boundaries?

6 TYPES

PHYSICAL

Physical boundaries cover your physical being, your personal space, and property, as well as your right to privacy. Setting these boundaries includes putting your physical needs as a fundamental priority. To set those boundaries you need to consider what you feel comfortable with in regards to touch, space, sleep, etc.

INTELLECTUAL

Intellectual boundaries include your thoughts, ideas, beliefs, creative expressions, etc. An intellectual boundary includes, but is not limited to, communicative boundaries. How we talk to others and how we accept communication styles is important. How do you communicate your willingness to listen or need to end a conversation?

EMOTIONAL

Emotional boundaries are those that consider your feelings and overall life story. What is it that you are willing to share with others? How does that differentiate based on the relationship you have with someone? If you start to take on the emotional identity of someone else, an emotional boundary is needed.

SEXUAL

Sexual boundaries are important to establish before being intimate with another individual. Sexual boundaries include, but are not limited to, open communication when discussing sexual boundaries. Consent is an important component of sexual boundaries. Ask yourself what you are and aren't comfortable with doing.

MATERIAL

Material boundaries are set to protect your material goods. This would be your physical property or items that hold value in your life. While material boundaries are not often considered, it's important to establish boundaries with items that hold value to you. This can be a monetary boundary.

TIME

Time boundaries help establish the importance of your time. How you wish to spend your time is a decision that is all your own. When you set time boundaries, consider what you need to prioritize. Whom you spend your time with is also a part of setting a boundary with your time.

Short, clear statements for holding a line in the moment.

I don't need to explain my decisions to you.

I am not the person to discuss those thoughts with

I don't feel comfortable with those thoughts.

I want to pause this conversation and come back when I have the capacity to process it all.

We do not agree, and it isn't helping our relationship to continue to disagree. How would you like to move forward knowing we may never have the same opinion?

I don't feel my voice has been heard in this conversation. I don't wish to proceed with this conversation.

I do not find that funny.

My thoughts/actions are not up for discussion.

That's not going to work for me. Are there other options we can consider?

I value what you tell me, but I am not in a headspace where I can receive the information.

I don't have the capacity to be a part of that right now.

I feel undermined when you discuss my life with others. I can't continue this relationship if that behavior continues.

I appreciate your concern, but it's not something I wish to discuss with you.

That is a very personal question to ask someone. I will not be answering your question.

I see your message, but I don't have the capacity to respond.

You are making me feel guilty as an attempt to control the way I will handle my actions/thoughts. I will not let you continue to manipulate my emotions.

I don't need help.

I make decisions off my personal experience and education. I am not obligated to discuss them with you.

That is a sensitive topic for me, and I'm not in a place to discuss it.

That thought process is not going to work for me.

I need to process that thought/invite; let me get back to you.

You interrupted my thought.

I can't entirely agree with that statement.

I'm not sure how you want me to respond to that question.

I'm confident in the decisions I've made for myself/my family.

Thank you for offering your help, but I am confident in my approach.

I don't agree with what you are saying.

I don't think I am your intended audience.

I only discuss that with medical professionals.

That is not something I am willing to discuss.

No.

I don't feel comfortable with that choice.

It's inappropriate that you asked me that question.

I don't feel comfortable with what you've just said.

I don't feel comfortable in this space.

This is my body, and I do not wish to partake.

My health is not up for a discussion with you. I will handle my health and weight with my doctor.

I appreciate that you want to protect me, but I can make my own decisions.

I do not feel comfortable with you touching me in that manner.

Are you struggling to set boundaries with other individuals? Here is a prompt list to help you get started. Use the prompts to help respond or role-play situational experiences.

I've never thought about it that way but I'd like to process it before continuing the conversation.

Thank you for offering to help, but I would like to handle it on my own.

Thank you for offering your experience but I would like to try it for myself.

I would like to understand what you are trying to communicate to me but I'm having a hard time processing your (tone, volume, etc). I think it's best that we step away for a couple of minutes.

I value what you are saying but I need to go to sleep. Let's talk about this at a later time.

I appreciate how you feel but I need to make decisions that are beneficial to my own growth.

We may not be aligned on this issue. At this point, I'm not in a place to have a conversation on this topic.

I'd be happy to have this conversation at a later date when we both feel it is right.

I don't feel comfortable having this conversation with you, I ask that we don't touch this topic moving forward.

I understand that you think "x" will have this outcome, but I don't believe that to be true. This is why I believe in something different.

I'm currently overwhelmed. I would appreciate having this conversation with you at a different time.

I'm currently overwhelmed. Can you send this information to me so I can have time to process what you are asking?

I'm sorry that I hurt your feelings. As a human, I am trying to protect my needs too.

I appreciate that you have many great ideas. However, at this time I'd like the space to come up with my own creative ideas.

I don't have the information I wish I had for you. I am going to need some time and space to gather it. I will send it to you when it's ready.

Thank you for considering me. Unfortunately, at this time, I need to decline.

No, thank you. I don't need to give an explanation.

I appreciate that you want to see me but I need you to leave. My space is very important to me.

I'm prioritizing my own self-care at this time. I will need to get back to you at a later time.

I don't appreciate you attempting to get me to overlook what is best for me, so you can get what you want from me. I will not be afraid of your ultimatums.

I don't respond positively to your guilt.

I appreciate you sharing your feelings with me. However, your feelings don't override my emotional needs and/or capacity.

I'm done for tonight. Respectfully, I need to go (or have you go) for now. We can talk more at a later time.

I appreciate you verbalizing your opinion. However, I need to make my own decision as an adult.

I've had a great time with you today but unfortunately, I need to leave.

No, I do not wish to do that at this time.

I don't feel ready emotionally to have this conversation. I will need to process this on my own.

I have had a great time hanging out with you recently. However, I need to have some space.

I appreciate you cooking for me. Unfortunately, I have a dietary restriction and can't partake in eating.

I don't appreciate the way you communicated that to me. Moving forward, I need you to take a different approach or not approach that subject at all.

I said "No". I do not need to say anything more.

I appreciate that you may celebrate by doing X. However, that is not something I would like to partake in. We can talk at a later time.

I'm feeling overwhelmed. I need you to handle more on your own at this time.

I don't wish to drink.

I don't have space to process what you've said right now. I will need to clear my head and come back when I have the ability to hear you out. Please give me space during this time.