

Setting Boundaries

Boundaries are very important in any and all relationships. Social psychologist Jane Adams, PhD says "Boundaries regulate distance and closeness...controlling not only how open we are with others but also how vigilant we are in protecting our real selves from intrusion or encroachment." You must have some boundaries in order to be respected and valued by others as well as by yourself. No one respects people that they can take advantage of and run over so to speak. Intimate relationships especially need boundaries. You can only manage your boundaries if you recognize that a boundary issue - yours or someone else's - exists. What are your boundaries? Have you defined them and clarified them to your partner? If not it is time to set some boundaries and then define and explain them to the people that may have an opportunity to cross those boundaries.

An Example of setting boundaries in an intimate relationship: Before I married my husband I set two solid boundaries with him. 1.) I told him I would not tolerate physical or emotional abuse. 2.) I told him I would not tolerate or accept cheating or infidelity. I made it very clear that if either of those boundaries were crossed that I would walk away from the relationship and never look back. He listened and understood my boundaries and said that he could honor those and so we moved forward and got married. We have now been happily married for over 24 years.

Set boundaries with your loved ones. Set boundaries with your family members. Set boundaries with your friends and co workers. The more clearly defined they are the better they will be received and respected. Say what you mean and mean what you say - once a boundary is set if someone crosses that boundary then there should be some consequences of some kind. Let the consequence fit the crime so to speak.

Another example of setting a boundary with a friend: If you want a friendship that is based on honesty then tell your friend this. Define to them what is important to you in a friendship and that honesty is key. Then if you catch your friend in a lie, then call that friend on it, tell them that you cannot continue the friendship if there are lies between the two of you. Your boundary was crossed and there is a consequence.

Understand that it is okay to forgive a person once if a boundary was crossed if they were not clear on what the boundaries were in the first place. But if that boundary is ever crossed again then take action and end the relationship.

If you learn to set boundaries in any of your relationships early on

and then stick to those boundaries, you will feel better about yourself overall and others will respect you and treat you better in the future. Respect your boundaries and respect the boundaries of others.

Recommended reading: "A Woman's Guide to Setting Boundaries" by Deidre Ann Tyler and "Boundaries in Dating" by Dr. Henry Cloud and "Boundary Issues: Using Boundary Intelligence to get the Intimacy You Want and the Independence You Need in Life, Love, and Work", by Jane Adams, PhD.

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