

### Boundaries?

Have you ever met someone who has no boundaries? You know, a person who thinks that everything is their business? Or sometimes it's a person who just doesn't stand up for themselves. They can easily be pushed into doing something they don't want to do. Or, sometimes a person without boundaries is one who is controlling and constantly trying to get you to do what they want.

Boundaries are limits that we create and agree on in order to establish a clear, mental line for what is and is not acceptable behavior. In other words, boundaries are simply a way of saying this is what we are and are not going to do. Someone who goes beyond their boundaries zaps themselves; they either let others control them or they try controlling others. **A good tip is to never follow advice from someone you don't want to be like.**

### What?

The need to have boundaries may sound like a strange thing, but boundaries are not very complicated. **You are responsible for your own feelings, and you are not responsible for other's feelings.**

For example, it is your responsibility to keep your home clean. It is not your responsibility to keep your friend's home clean. Another example, is that you are responsible for your emotions, but it is not your job to make other people happy. Boundaries are knowing what you are supposed to do for yourself and not thinking it is your job to do the same for others.

When you look at the boundaries you have set in your relationships, you will quickly see that they affect almost every part of life. There may be people in your life that you need to spend less time with, and you can find people you look up to and want to be like. We might look at boundaries like it's a bad thing, so we ignore it like we ignore a check engine light. But if we continue to let our boundaries get crossed, eventually our entire engine could break. If you don't set boundaries, people won't know how to act around you, and you will be left feeling disrespected. The other side of this coin is that without your own boundaries you are less likely to recognize those of others, and might be disrespecting them.

### Where Are You?

Healthy boundaries are an important part of being a functional adult. **Takers should find ways to serve others selflessly, without any personal gain; learn to respect others as much as you respect yourself.** Givers should identify why it is they allow themselves to be walked on; then identify your values. Look at the lists below. Which best describes you?

#### **A person without boundaries may be:**

- Easily pushed to doing something they don't want to do.
- Overly involved in "helping" others.
- Constantly making bad decisions and blaming the consequences on others.
- Controlling of the actions of others (especially their significant other).
- Easily "hurt" when their friend or a family member wants to do something without them.

## **A person with good boundaries will be:**

- Able to stand up for what they think is right.
- Able to help others without linking their own self-esteem to the success of others.
- Able to see when and where they make mistakes and take responsibility for the consequences.
- Able to let others be themselves without constantly getting into their business.

***A healthy boundary is just a line that defines where you end and the next person begins.***

## **Call to Action**

***Spend time writing down your personal boundaries for each of the five areas: Emotional, Intellectual, Physical, Sexual, and Financial. Talk with your partner about them.***

### WHAT IF THEY CROSS YOUR BOUNDARY?

- **Be persistent** – remind them that is breaking your boundary and why you made that boundary: because of your value
- **Remain calm** – Use I statements. Example of an I statement: “I feel angry when you speak to me that way” not “You make me angry” (staying unemotional helps you remain in control of the conversation).
- **Limit engagement/Separate** – When boundaries are repeatedly crossed, it may be time to limit engagement or have a physical separation. Avoid “I promise I’ll never do it again” excuses, and watch for consistent behavior changes instead.

***If you are in an abusive relationship, get help.*** Text **START to 88788**, the National Domestic Violence Hotline. The important thing is to make sure that each person understands that there is no compromising or wiggle room on certain boundaries.