

Checklist:

How to Set Healthy Boundaries

Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

What to Say

You always have the right to say “no”. When doing so, express yourself clearly and without ambiguity so there is no doubt about what you want.

“I’m not comfortable with this”	“Please don’t do that”	“Not at this time”
“I can’t do that for you”	“This doesn’t work for me”	“I’ve decided not to”
“This is not acceptable”	“I’m drawing the line at ___”	“I don’t want to do that”

What to Do

Use Confident Body Language: Face the other person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume (not too quiet, and not too loud).

Be Respectful: Avoid yelling, using put-downs, or giving the silent treatment. It’s okay to be firm, but your message will be better received if you are respectful.

Plan Ahead: Think about what you want to say, and how you will say it, before entering a difficult discussion. This can help you feel more confident about your position.

Compromise: When appropriate, listen and consider the needs of the other person. You never have to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.

Exercise: How to Set Healthy Boundaries

Instructions: Respond to the following practice questions as if you were really in each situation. Think about the language you would use to firmly state your boundary.

For example:

Situation: You notice your roommate has been eating your food in the fridge. You never discussed plans to share food, and don't want them eating what you bought.

- **Response:** *"I'd like to keep our food separate. If there's something of mine that you want, please ask me before taking it."*

Situation: Your friend calls you at 11 pm to discuss issues she is having with her boyfriend. You need to wake up at 6 am.

- **Response:** *"I can tell you're upset. I want to talk to you, but I need to go to bed. Maybe we can talk tomorrow afternoon."*

Exercise:

- **Situation #1:** You invited a friend over for the evening, but now it's getting late. You would like to get ready for bed, but your friend seems unaware of how late it is.
 - **Response #1:**
- **Situation #2:** A good friend asks you out on a date. You are not interested in being more than friends. You would like to let them down clearly, but gently.
 - **Response #2:**

- **Situation #3:** You missed several days of work due to a medical condition. When you get back, a coworker asks what happened. You feel this information is personal, and do not want to share.
 - **Response #3:**

- **Situation #4:** Your brother asks if you can watch his two young children on Saturday morning. You already have plans.
 - **Response #4:**

- **Situation #5:** Your coworker is upset about their recent performance review. They start yelling and slamming their fist on their desk. This is making you very uncomfortable.
 - **Response #5:**

- **Situation #6:** A salesperson comes to your door during dinner. You try to politely show disinterest, but they keep giving their sales pitch. You want to get back to dinner.
 - **Response #6:**

Great job!