

HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

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Before you implement your personal boundaries, it's important to understand your fundamental rights. Cole has identified them as the Boundary Boss Bill of Rights:

Have you ever said yes, because you didn't want to be rude?
Have you ever stuffed your truth down because you didn't want to hurt someone's feelings?
Have you ever avoided sharing the dissatisfactory service you received and quietly paid for it anyway?

If those scenarios resonate with you, then you may need a healthy boundary tune-up.

When you become aware of boundaries and how important it is to have them, it means you can articulate your deal breakers, desires, limits, and preferences.

"Unhealthy boundaries are rooted in confusion about what's actually your responsibility," explains psychotherapist Terri Cole.

People who don't have boundaries often identify with being people-pleasers. They have embarrassment and shame of appearing mean and simply want to be liked. But, the truth is, we're actually betraying ourselves when we aren't clear about our needs and preferences. On the contrary, having boundaries is honest and loving.

Many of us, women in particular, were raised and praised for being nice; it's seen as the highest virtue in life. Under this principle, it is more suitable to say yes than it is to say no.

So, how can you begin to design your boundary road map? First, do an inventory of what is working in your life, and what is not working. For example, if Mark from the office calls you on the weekends, ask yourself if that is okay with you. Make sure that you also honestly evaluate how you treat yourself; it sets the bar for how you condone the way people treat you.

Complete this boundary checklist exercise in all major categories of your life—e.g., material, mental, physical, relationships.

1. **You have the right to say no (or yes) to others without feeling guilty.**
2. **You have the right to make mistakes, to course correct, or change your mind.**
3. **You have the right to negotiate your preferences, desires, and needs.**
4. **You have the right to express and honor all of your feelings, if you so choose.**
5. **You have the right to voice your opinion, even if others disagree.**
6. **You have the right to be treated with respect, consideration, and care.**
7. **You have the right to determine who has the privilege of being in your life.**
8. **You have the right to communicate your boundaries, limits, and deal breakers.**
9. **You have the right to prioritize your self-care without feeling selfish.**
10. **You have the right to talk true, be seen, and live free.**

Next, after you have determined your boundaries, you will need to start practicing them in everyday, real-life moments. Having and holding boundaries will take time to become second nature to you. Take one step at a time, and remember to have compassion for yourself.

Others will begin to notice when you change your boundaries. "People who love you don't want you to change. Unconsciously, they are worried you won't love them anymore or somehow won't accept them anymore. We have an innate fear of change," said Cole.

To demonstrate some common scenarios where boundaries come in handy, here are a few scripts.

Example 1: You disagree with a friend, colleague, or client on a decision that involves both of you. "That game plan doesn't quite sit well with me. (Then share what you'd propose doing instead.) I'd love to compromise and meet somewhere in the middle."

Example 2: Someone asks you an extraordinarily personal question, such as "How did your loved one die?" or "Why don't you have any children?" Instead of answering, an alternative response could be returning a question to them, such as "Why do you want to know that?" or "Why would you ask me that?" Or, you can simply not answer them at all and change the subject.

As you begin to set yourself free from living a life without personal barriers, consider taking a free assessment at boundaryquiz.com, which will help establish your boundary baseline.

Mary Beth is an intuitive life coach living in Atlanta, Georgia, with a devout passion for spreading light.