

# the Art of Setting Boundaries

**A THERAPIST'S GUIDE  
TO SAYING NO &  
PROTECTING YOUR PEACE**



**YOUR STORY**



*setting*  
**BOUNDARIES**

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# 01 The Basics BOUNDARIES



**Boundaries help us show up as our best selves.**

**They help build trust, safety and real connection.**  
Becoming more aware of boundaries can help to prevent burnout and protect our wellbeing. They often give us space to recharge and prioritise what really matters.

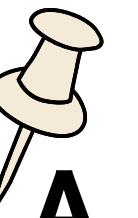
**Setting boundaries can give us a sense of control over our time, bodies and energy.** In order to protect our wellbeing we need to decide on our limits and work out how to communicate our needs.

**Boundaries can include physical (personal space), communication (what we're willing to talk about), emotional boundaries, relational boundaries, work and time boundaries.**

**Considering our boundaries allows us to work towards relating to others with respect and understanding, without compromising our own needs.**

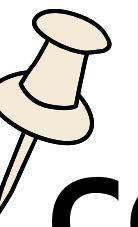
02

*Why is  
it so hard?*



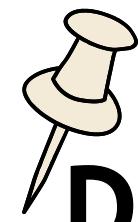
## A FEAR OF CONFLICT

If you are anxious or highly sensitive then you may avoid anything that could potentially cause conflict, upset someone or make things uncomfortable. If your main concern is to keep people happy, then your default may be to ignore setting a boundary in favour of always keeping the peace.



## COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

Sometimes we can get overwhelmed by too much information, emotions and sensory input. This can make it really difficult to clarify our personal needs in the moment and processing becomes difficult. In a sea of tasks and confusion, boundaries are one more thing to navigate.



## DIFFICULTY SELF-ADVOCATING

Lots of us grew up forming beliefs such as, 'My needs don't really matter' or 'I am always too much'. These can be hard messages to unlearn and make it difficult to start advocating for what you need. It can be tricky to take up the space you deserve after shrinking for so long.

03

## WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Setting boundaries can help to protect against burnout, overwhelm and being taken advantage of by others.

They can also make more room for self-care and increase our ability to say no.

Boundaries affirm your self worth because setting a boundary is an act of self-respect.

We set them in recognition of our needs being valid and important. We are giving ourselves permission to enjoy the people and tasks that really matter to us.

They help to form positive relationships by establishing respect and mutual understanding.

This means you are not overcommitting and everyone feels understood, valued and the relationship has more room to flourish.

# How do I set them?

## Understand Your Needs

Consider what you find draining and when you might feel overwhelmed...  
What are your sensory needs?  
Where do you need to say no?

## Practice Small

Build your confidence by saying no in small ways at first.  
Your body might need to learn it is **SAFE** to prioritise your own needs.

## Use Simple Language

You do not need to over explain or justify your needs.  
Keep some short phrases in mind such as 'That doesn't suit' or 'Not right now, thank you.'

## Use Preemptive Boundaries

If the same tricky things come up repeatedly then learn to set boundaries beforehand.  
i.e 'I will be leaving the party early tonight.'

## Don't take pushback personally

Some people might try to resist your boundary, especially if they are used to you always agreeing. However, its not your job to manage their feelings.

## Be Consistant

You may have to repeat yourself and reinforce boundaries that are important to you, both in what you communicate and how you behave.

# 05

## 4 MISTAKES TO AVOID...



- 01 OVER EXPLAINING:**  
Being too nice can confuse people and gives the impression that we don't really care or even need the boundary. Being clear and concise will prevent boundaries being crossed.
- 02 PHRASING BOUNDARIES AS QUESTIONS:**  
Try to communicate boundaries as statements rather than questions. 'I will not' or 'I can't' or 'I need to' will reduce any confusion or debate.
- 03 IGNORING YOUR BODY:**  
Listen to what your body is trying to tell you - a tightness, an irritation, an unease. These are signs your body is communicating a limit.
- 04 NOT HAVING A CONSEQUENCE:**  
It can be really helpful to explicitly state the action you will take if the boundary isn't respected i.e "If this happens again I will walk away from the conversation."

## 06 ~~further~~ **SUPPORT...**



Boundaries are not about pushing people away! They actually create the space you need to show up more fully having observed your limits and protected your peace.



The boundaries you set with your family might not be the same ones with your work colleagues. Take time to consider the different settings, the environment, the history and your own needs.



Checking in with yourself regularly is helpful! You may need to set some internal boundaries with yourself:

**'I will not guilt myself for needing rest after this.'**

If you would like further help and support relating to setting boundaries then please get in touch -

**[info@yourstorytherapy.org](mailto:info@yourstorytherapy.org)**

Thank You.

YOUR STORY