



HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES WITH FAMILY

Because we know families our entire lives, it's common to get to a point where family members are too engaged in each other's lives. Maybe you feel overwhelmed because a family member is meddling too much, or you have a family member who you can't bear to stay in a room with.

Boundaries are the guidelines we set with others about our expectations, availability, and energy. Because they communicate how we feel, boundaries prevent us from overcommitting or feeling resentful.

If you feel resentful or disengaged with family, use these tips to learn how to set healthy family boundaries. You can set boundaries where family members can feel comfortable to share ideas, thoughts and feelings.

TYPES OF BOUNDARIES YOU CAN SET:

1. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES.

What are your boundaries around personal space? Maybe you need a certain amount of physical time to rest or eat food, especially after a long day of work.

2. TIME BOUNDARIES.

How much time do you have to spend with your family? Do you have other commitments such as school, work, or community involvement? **Time boundaries prevent you from overcommitting and ensure that you bring positive energy to the events you do show up for.**

3. EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES.

Do you have a family member who comes to vent to you all the time? Or maybe you want to set an emotional boundary to someone who responds critically when you share your feelings.

4. INTELLECTUAL BOUNDARIES.

You can set intellectual boundaries such as discussing politics or religion or sharing biased news in a family group chat. Intellectual boundaries can prevent tension during family dinners or holidays.

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO SET HEALTHY FAMILY BOUNDARIES:

1. BE EMPATHETIC AS YOU LEARN TO SET BOUNDARIES.

Consider that your family might interpret new boundaries as being pushed away. Describe boundaries as a way to learn more about you and your needs. Check in with their emotions and invite them to learn about setting boundaries along with you.

- Consider starting the boundary with a “thank you.”
- **Check in with the other person and ask what they need.**

2. MAKE THE BOUNDARY ABOUT YOU AND YOUR NEEDS.

When you state a boundary, focus on you. This will help others feel comfortable and less defensive.

- “In order to continue this discussion, I need us to ...”
- “I notice we don’t get very far when we talk about politics. Can we change the topic to something else?”
- “I would love to join your family for dinner, but I can only stay for an hour.”

3. EXPLORE WHAT YOU NEED.

Healthy boundaries are set by knowing your needs. Practice journaling as a way to explore what you need from different situations.

- Do you need to prioritize yourself?
- What makes you feel uncomfortable?
- What is important for you?
- How can you make situations more enjoyable?

4. BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR NEEDS AND COMMUNICATE THEM.

If you feel resentment, it’s possible that you’re not clearly communicating your needs. If you need space or prefer one activity over another, communicate that with your family. Try not to just appease others at the expense of your own enjoyment.

5. ANTICIPATE YOUR TRIGGERS.

Prepare for stressful family situations and plan ahead for how you will handle them.

- If you have an uncle who talks endlessly about politics, prepare what you will say.
- **Prepare to set the boundary more than once.** When we grow up around families our entire lives, it's easy to fall into habits with how we relate. It might take a few reminders for a family member to get used to the new boundary.
- Reassure your family member that this boundary can strengthen your relationship and bring you closer.

Boundaries may sound aggressive, but they are actually a way to respect and honor both parties, so they can grow and thrive together.

They can deepen the connection between you and your family members, allowing everyone to learn more about each other.

