

1. Name your limits.

You can't set good boundaries if you're unsure of where you stand. So identify your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual limits what you can tolerate and accept and what makes you feel uncomfortable or stressed. Those feelings help us identify what our limits are.

2. Tune into your feelings.

Two common feelings come up when we let go of our boundaries: discomfort and resentment.

Resentment usually comes from being taken advantage of or not appreciated. When someone acts in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, that's a cue to us they may be violating or crossing a boundary.

3. Be direct.

There are other times you might need to be direct. For instance, in a romantic relationship, time can become a boundary issue. Partners might need to talk about how much time they need to maintain their sense of self and how much time to spend together.

4. Give yourself permission.

Fear, guilt and self-doubt are big potential pitfalls. We might fear the other person's response if we set and enforce our boundaries. We might feel guilty by speaking up or saying no to a family member. Remember, boundaries aren't just a sign of a healthy relationship; they're a sign of self-respect. So give yourself the permission to set boundaries and work to preserve them.

5. Practice self-awareness.

Again, boundaries are all about listening to your feelings and honoring them. If you notice yourself slipping and not sustaining your boundaries, ask yourself,

"What's changed? Consider "What I am doing or [what is] the other person doing?" or "What is the situation eliciting that's making me resentful or stressed?" Then, mull over your options: "What am I going to do about the situation? What do I have control over?"

6. Consider your past and present.

How you were raised along with your role in your family can become additional obstacles in setting and preserving boundaries. If you held the role of caretaker, you learned to focus on others, letting yourself be drained emotionally or physically. Ignoring your own needs might have become the norm for you.

Also, think about the people you surround yourself with. "Are the relationships reciprocal?" Is there a healthy give and take?

7. Make self-care a priority.

Give yourself permission to put yourself first. When we do this, our need and motivation to set boundaries become stronger. Self-care also means recognizing the importance of your feelings and honoring them.

8. Seek support.

If you're having a hard time with boundaries, seek some support. Call Catalyst at 1-800-895-5476 to get more information.

9. Be assertive.

Of course, we know that it's not enough to create boundaries; we actually have to follow through. It's important to assertively communicate with the other person when they've crossed a boundary. Being assertive and respectful is part of healthy relationships.

10. Start small.

Like any new skill, assertively communicating your boundaries takes practice. Start with something small that is less threatening such as saying no to a friend. Setting boundaries can be uncomfortable, scary, and very challenging at first. Maintain healthy relationships that will respect your boundaries and support you setting them. Let go of the relationships that do not support you and trust in yourself that you are doing the right thing for YOU!

