

# BOUNDARIES

Create a safety bubble of emotional and physical space needed to be you. Become resistant to external pressures to being something other than yourself.

Clearly define and communicate your own rules and boundaries based on your needs and preferences.

Communicating boundaries can be challenging for many. Know that you have the right to healthy boundaries. Overcome fear of conflict and confrontation by learning how to assert your rights without fear, guilt, or aggression. Be honest and let others know what boundaries have been crossed.

Boundaries change and evolve as we learn more about ourselves and how we best work with others. It is okay to change your mind about your different boundaries along the way. It helps to be honest and ask others to be patient with you and your process.

It is important to be aware of our own feelings and experiences especially when faced with

a difficult situation. Self-care, honesty, and mindfulness in action can help.

Know what internal and external resources you need and when to use them. Not only does it enhance your own health, wellness and happiness but you can share your tools with others.

Your first priority is to keep yourself healthy and keep your cup filled. Anything that spills over can be offered out as support to others. Beware of giving from an unfilled cup.

When supporting others, help them obtain the resources and additional supports they need. Don't be the only one doing the supporting. Make sure you know the help, crisis, and warm lines for yourself, friends, family and peers. Know when to call and call.

Renew and rejuvenate your energy after a taxing situation or providing support. Go for a walk, listen to music, get a massage, do some meditation. Keep the balance of giving and receiving to sustain the flow.

“Boundaries are a declaration of the integrity of you. Boundaries reaffirm, day in and day out, “who you are” and what interactions and behaviors you deem acceptable and unacceptable to you. Boundaries can be seen as a set of guiding principles that help you govern the closeness or the distance you are comfortable with between yourself and others needed to maintain the integrity of you.”

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# ASSERTIVENESS

Having good boundaries and self-care makes being assertive much easier. As you know and understand more about your needs you are better able to assert them.

Being assertive takes time and practice. We may not learn it overnight but as we continue to incorporate assertiveness skills into our interactions we see how effective they can be.

An unassertive “No” can be accompanied by defending explanations as a result of feeling guilty or not worthy of saying no. E.g. “I don’t think I can meet you tonight. I worked a lot today, I had people stay over all weekend, I have to feed my cat and cook and I’m not feeling well, etc.”

An aggressive “No” is done with anger and force (sometimes the anger can be subtle and/or passive aggressive). E.g. “No, leave me alone, you are so manipulative.”

An assertive “No” provides simple explanation and is direct. E.g. “I cannot meet you tonight. I need some time alone.”

Try to notice voice tones and what they convey. For example, raising your voice at the end of a sentence interjects a note of uncertainty and implies asking rather than telling.

Try standing up straight and tall when you want to be assertive. Find the balance between unassertive and aggressive posture.

Unassertive eye contact involves very little and/or is directed to the ground. Aggressive eye contact never breaks. Assertive eye contact is direct and occurs about 50 % of the time.

**Note:** Body language changes depending on culture and upbringing. Be aware of different non-verbal communication styles. **For more on cross cultural communication check out:**  
[www.diversitycouncil.org/  
toolkit/Resources\\_TipSheet\\_  
NonverbalCrossCulturalCommunication.pdf](http://www.diversitycouncil.org/toolkit/Resources_TipSheet_NonverbalCrossCulturalCommunication.pdf)

“Assertiveness is about openly communicating our feelings and establishing boundaries without guilt or fear.” ~**Cloris Kylie**

“Whenever we avoid conflict by keeping our feelings to ourselves, we do ourselves and others a disservice.” ~**Doreen Virtue**

If you say, “Yes,” when you want to say, “No,” you’ll resent what you agreed to do. **It’s honorable and authentic to say “No”.**