

## Tune into Boundaries: Your Well-being Depends Upon It

Personal boundaries can be both emotional and physical. Experts agree you need healthy boundaries—at work and in all aspects of life—to support your overall well-being. What’s more, you need to make sure those boundaries are respected by others.

How to begin? Decide first what your values are:



**Physically**, are you allowing yourself enough distance from others to stay healthy and follow guidelines?

**Mentally**, are you easily swayed by other people’s thoughts and opinions? Can you listen with an open mind to other people’s opinions?

**Emotionally**, do you recognize and respect your own feelings, independent of others’?

**Spiritually**, do you honor your beliefs and respect the differences of others’?

Respect for self and for others is the prerequisite for setting and keeping healthy, effective boundaries. And remember, you deserve them. For instance, if someone steps into your personal space and that makes you feel uncomfortable, let him or her know. In many cases, communication works.

Unfortunately, people often learn about their boundaries in the heat of the moment, when they’ve become angry or frustrated. Be proactive, not reactive: it’s healthier and more effective. That way, you respond with a sense of empowerment and calm rather than resentment and guilt.

### Protecting Your Boundaries

There are many times in life we need to put the needs of others before our own. However, keep in mind you need to advocate for yourself before you can effectively advocate for someone else. Consider these coping techniques from author Maureen Dawn Healy if your boundaries are threatened:

**The Hot Soup Breath** is a way to calm down quickly and think before responding. Take air in through your nose and out through your mouth, as if you were cooling hot soup. Take five Hot Soup Breaths.

**Water** helps clear negative energy from the body. Drink a glass of water or wash your hands; imagine the water washing away your agitation.

**Bubble Up Imagery.** Imagine yourself surrounded by a bubble of light. Hold onto that image. Anytime a conversation or encounter is negative and affecting you, tell yourself to “bubble up!” Conjure up that image to protect yourself; it allows you to be more positive and productive.

**The Aura Zip Imagery.** Your aura is a protective atmosphere that surrounds you. In the aura zip, start with a few deep breaths to promote calmness. Envision your main energy line as a zipper, running from your hips to the top of your head. Either with eyes closed or using your hands, zip up your invisible energy, from bottom to top. Close that zipper around your new positive energy.

Be attentive to your feelings, especially cues that you are feeling uncomfortable. Do you feel taken advantage of or unappreciated? You may be driving yourself beyond your limit, trying to be the good employee, the good daughter or son, the good parent or the good spouse. Are you a people-pleaser, indecisive, or go along with others just because it's easier? Those are signs your boundaries need adjusting.

### **One Size Doesn't Fit All**

Once your boundaries are set, you need to discern the boundaries of others. And no, they're not the same as yours, according to Rachel Eddins in her article "Keeping Good Boundaries & Getting Your Needs Met."

Don't assume people think, feel and act as you do. Be cautious around mixed messages. Here are some tips that keep your boundaries intact as you respect the boundaries of others:



- Have the same respect for others that you would like to receive.
- Respect a person's voice when he/she disagrees with you.
- Listen without interruption and make a sincere effort to understand.
- Pay attention to body language. A person moving away from you is indicating that you have crossed over into his/her personal space.
- Listen for verbal cues, such as: "I asked you to knock before entering my office."
- Be flexible; we are constantly learning and growing.
- Practice having compassion for yourself and others without having to fix everything.
- Recognize that mistakes are opportunities for learning and growth; everyone makes them.
- Listen to others about how your behavior impacts them.
- Pay attention to activities that energize you and drain you. Delegate when possible, get out into nature, move away from perfectionism. Engage in energizing activities to keep balance in the midst of life's demands.
- Pause and take a breath before reacting.
- Use your values as guides in decision-making rather than the opinions of others.

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