

Boundaries List

Boundaries are about defining your limits, which maximizes your ability to connect. Figure out what you can and cannot do, what you are willing to do and not willing to do, and how much of that information you want to communicate to the other person or people connected to the situation.

Boundaries can be most effectively communicated using the following steps:

1. Start with the underlying message (*“I’m having this conversation because I love you and want to be connected to you.”*)
2. Using your emotions and needs, explain your limits (*“When _____ happened, the message I got, whether or not you meant to send that message, was _____, which makes me feel _____. I know I’m going to struggle to be connected until we sort through it.”*)
3. Explore changes that might resolve the issue (*“Would it be possible to _____? Or are there other suggestions you think might be helpful?”*)
4. Optional (if negative response is received) – State the steps you will use to honor your limits if the boundary is crossed (*“If we can’t come up with a solution that feels safe, I’m going to take the following steps for now and would like to discuss this topic in our next therapy session.”*)

You may find it helpful to refer to your Emotional Safety List, Accountability Contract, Three Circles Worksheet, Trauma Cycle Worksheet and/or Escape Cycle Worksheet, Recovery Plan Worksheet, and/or Emotional Safety in Physical Connection Worksheet.

Example:

Disconnecting Behavior	Response	Action to Repair
Yelling and/or “spiky” language (shaming or sharp words)	Call a time-out	Fill out a time-out worksheet, try to return to the conversation, if it escalates again, bring the conversation to therapy
Disable tracking on your phone after offering to share location to help create emotional safety and rebuild trust	Step our physical connection down to a level 2	Meet with your therapist, complete a Contributing Factors worksheet, complete an Acting Out Amends Worksheet, present the Amends worksheet to me, enable tracking on your phone
Lie, either directly or by omission	Have you sleep in the spare room, step our physical connection down to level one	Meet with your therapist, complete a Contributing Factors worksheet, complete an Acting Out Amends Worksheet, and present the Amends worksheet to me