

Setting a *Boundary*

Say what you need, clearly and respectfully.

A boundary is a limit that protects your time, energy, values and wellbeing. Healthy boundaries are not walls that keep people out. They help others understand how to treat you, and they make relationships feel more honest and balanced. This worksheet will help you identify where you need a boundary, find clear words to express it, and prepare for how others may respond.

Signs you may need a *boundary*

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Feeling resentful after saying yes | ☐ Feeling drained after certain people or situations |
| ☐ Dreading particular requests or messages | ☐ Having little time or energy left for yourself |
| ☐ Others regularly overstepping what feels okay | ☐ Feeling guilty whenever you put yourself first |

Where do I need a *boundary*?

Think about the areas of your life below. Where do you feel stretched, uncomfortable or resentful?

Time

Plans, availability, being on time.

Energy

How much you take on.

Emotional

What you share and carry for others.

Personal space

Your home, privacy and body.

Digital

Messages, calls and social media.

Work

Hours, workload and roles.

Finding the *Words*

Keep it clear, calm and kind.

You do not need a long explanation to set a boundary. A short, clear statement is often easier for others to hear and easier for you to keep. Try this simple structure.

When the situation I feel your feeling I need your boundary

Helpful *tips*

- Use I statements rather than blame.
- Keep it short. You do not need to over explain.
- Stay calm and kind, but firm.
- Say what you will do, not only what you want others to do.
- Follow through, so your words carry meaning.

Things to *avoid*

- Apologising for having a need.
- Long justifications or arguments.
- Raising it in the heat of the moment.
- Hinting and hoping they will guess.
- Giving in straight away if met with resistance.

At work

"I am not able to reply to messages after 8pm. I will respond first thing in the morning."

With family

"I love seeing you, and I need you to call before visiting."

With a friend

"I cannot lend money right now, but I am happy to help in another way."

My boundary in my own *words*

When ... I feel ... I need ...

Preparing for *Responses*

Stay steady, whatever the reaction.

People may respond to a new boundary in different ways, especially if they are used to things being a certain way. Some will accept it straight away. Others may feel surprised, push back or test it, so it helps to prepare.

How others may *respond*

- Accepting it with understanding.
- Feeling surprised or hurt.
- Pushing back or asking why.
- Testing it to see if you mean it.

Calm replies you can *use*

- This is new, and it is still what I need.
- I hear you. My answer is still no.
- I care about you, and this matters to me.
- I will not be changing my mind.

How they might *respond*

What I will *say*

How I will look after *myself* afterwards

Feeling guilty at first is common, and it usually eases with practice.

Would you like more *support*?

Sometimes boundaries feel especially hard to set, particularly with the people closest to us. Counselling offers a safe space to explore what makes this difficult and to build the confidence to ask for what you need.

Book a session at
www.marlynna.com

This resource is for general reflection and is not a substitute for professional support. Therapy sessions are not for emergencies. For immediate crisis support or urgent medical care, please contact your local emergency services.