What you need to know about
boundaries

Learn to set your own boundaries around what you're comfortable with to build healthier relationships

What are boundaries?

Boundaries are what we allow and don't allow in our lives from others including our family, work, friends, and strangers. They're like limits on what is okay and not okay with you.

Boundaries are personal - you set your own boundaries. They're about what you're comfortable with. Boundaries can also change with time and in different situations.

Why are boundaries important?

Healthy boundaries allow us to:

Keep our identity

Feel safe

Stand up for ourselves so we're not taken advantage of

And build stronger, healthier relationships

What do boundaries look like?

Emotional boundaries

Do friends or family bring lots of drama or need lots of attention? This can require too much of your emotions, and can drain you. If a friend is involving you in their personal life and leaving you no emotional energy, ask them to please stop, or tell them you need a break.
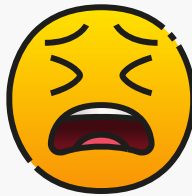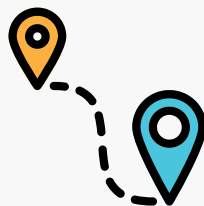
Sexual boundaries

Boundaries around sex are important in dating or close personal situations. Not everyone is comfortable with the same things. Communicate your boundaries and others should respect them.
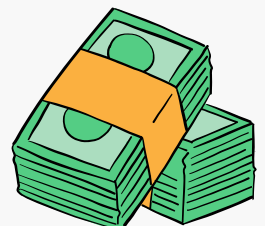
Physical boundaries

We all need different personal space. Some people like hugging or touching, others don't! Some people like surprise visits, some don't! Think about what space you need from friends and even family.

Financial boundaries

Friends and family may ask for money, or want to do things that cost more money than you want to spend. It's okay to say "No" to going on a trip or asking to find something cheaper to do.

Time boundaries

You can set boundaries around your work hours, and even with friends. For example, telling someone how you feel about them always running late, or always canceling plans on you.
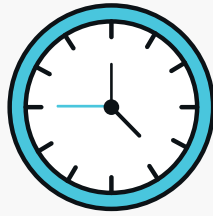
Intellectual boundaries

Friends and family can get into arguments or let jokes get out of control - to the point where they're not funny to you. If this happens often, think about leaving or asking them to stop before it upsets you.
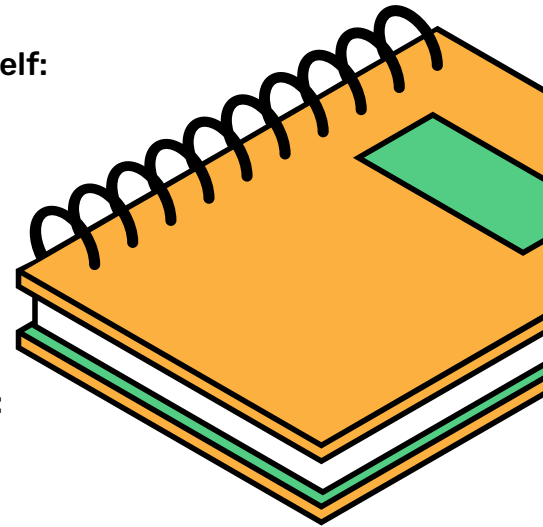
How do I know my boundaries?

To figure out what your healthy boundaries are, reflect on yourself:

- What do I need for myself?
- What is important to me?
- What will I allow from different people in my life?
- What am I comfortable and uncomfortable with in romantic relationships?
- What upsets me in my relationships?
- What makes me feel safe and loved?

Try writing your boundaries down for specific people in your life:

- What are you okay sharing with them?
- What are you not comfortable sharing with them?

How do I set my boundaries with others?

In a kind, but assertive way, tell people your boundaries and what will happen if they cross those boundaries.

> I'm sorry, I'm not comfortable with hugs. I'm just not a hugger.

> I can't go out to brunch every week at that place because it's too expensive. I'd like to go someplace else though.

> I don't want to get into these arguments. We do it every time you come over. Let's agree not to talk about politics. If you continue arguing with me about politics, I can't have you over.

It's healthy to say "No"

Boundaries are about limits and what others bring into your life or ask of you. Sometimes you may need to say No.

You can say No without saying "No", such as "I don't think so" or "I'd rather not."

But - be ready to say "No" if you need to. If you don't feel ready, practice in a mirror or with a friend you trust.