



6 Steps To
Setting
Healthy
Boundaries



Tune Into Your Feelings. Most of us don't recognize that our boundaries have been crossed until it's too late. You feel overwhelmed or resentful. You ignore that feeling deep in your gut. You start avoiding someone. All signs that you might not be setting healthy boundaries. The key is to begin to tune into your feelings and notice when they start to get more elevated. Think of checking in with your emotions and seeing where they are on a scale of 1 to 10. Anything above a 6 is a sign that it's time to set a boundary – whether that's saying no, asking for help or asking for time.

Look at Your Costs/Benefits. The next time you worry about setting a healthy boundary, start to look at the costs and benefits of setting boundaries. Think of it in terms of what it is costing you to not set healthy boundaries and what might be the benefits of setting boundaries with others. You might even want to consider the costs and benefits of NOT setting healthy boundaries since your brain already goes there. By the time you're done, it's likely that any costs will be far outweighed by the benefits – making it easier for you to take the leap.

Give Yourself Permission. Believe it or not most of us don't give ourselves permission to set boundaries. We think that we're going to hurt someone's feelings or that it's more important to put others ahead of ourselves. Fear gets in the way and we suddenly forget about why we wanted to set the boundary in the first place. It's important that you give yourself permission because even though the benefits will most likely outweigh the costs, you've likely been told that doing so would somehow be bad. The hard truth is that there is nothing wrong with setting boundaries – it's a good thing – for you and everyone around you. Wake up everyday with the simple phrase "I give myself permission to set healthy boundaries. I am doing so for the good of everyone around me."

Get Grounded. Getting grounded is important because it gives you the strength you need to carry out your task. We want to nurture our connection with ourself so that we can be aware and attuned to what we need and what we want to say. It helps keep us focused and in touch with our intuition. Getting grounding can mean getting quiet, meditating, praying, running, connecting with your energy centers – whatever works for you. Spend at least five minutes getting grounded daily as a way to help you set and maintain your boundaries.

Say No. Seems easy enough. But, most of us feel the need to explain ourselves or feel guilty. We feel like we should be there for others or if we say no, they won't like us or need us anymore. The problem is that our failure to say no is costing us our health and our self-esteem. No is a complete sentence. And the more we learn to kindly say no, the better we are going to feel. Practice saying no to small stuff. No to volunteering for a project, to drive your kids or even help your spouse. Do it without explanation. Don't promise to help next time – just say no.

Self-Care. Along with giving yourself permission to set boundaries, give yourself permission to put yourself first. The more you can make self-care a priority, the more likely you are to keep healthy boundaries in place. Self-care means taking time just for you. It forces you to say no and be more present – which will make you more available for others when you want to be. Start small by taking time to read, exercise or get a massage and build up to spending time on things that are your passion – no apologies. The more you can focus on self-care the less you'll be concerned about how hard it might be to set boundaries with others!

Shari Cottune