

Healthy Partner Relationship Boundaries



We all have personal boundaries that we want to be respected. This includes boundaries in romantic relationships, but how do we know if these rules we set are healthy? Healthy relationship boundaries exist when both partners feel respected and heard. Unfortunately, boundaries are often seen as controlling, when in fact open and honest conversations about your limits will create a healthier and more satisfying relationship (Cosio, 2014).

Every individual and every romantic relationship will have different boundaries that work best. To identify your boundaries, have a conversation with your partner where you both openly discuss your rules. Talk about why your boundaries are important, and let your partner respond with how it makes them feel (Barkin & Wisner, 2013).

Below are three types of boundaries and examples of each, to

help get your conversation started with your romantic partner:

1. **Physical Boundaries** are your personal “bubble” of space and the physical touch you are comfortable with (Therapy Aid, 2016). To create healthy physical boundaries in your relationship, have a conversation with your partner about the physical space you need at different times. You can also talk about what types of physical touch you are comfortable with and when you are comfortable with public displays of affection.

2. **Emotional Boundaries** focus on how people make you feel (Therapy Aid, 2016). Sometimes in relationships, we overshare or mention something that is a sensitive topic to our partner; which can lead to emotional limits being crossed. To create healthy emotional boundaries, use I-statements when explaining your needs to your partner (e.g., “I feel safe when we share this kind of information with each other;” Selva, 2021).

3. **Time Boundaries** are how you spend your time (Therapy Aid, 2016). Sometimes it can feel like your partner expects too much of your time, and they may feel like you spend too much time on things other than the relationship. You can create healthy time boundaries by explaining to your partner when you need personal time and how they can help make sure you get it, as well as planning time to spend together one-on-one with full attention for one another (Barkin & Wisner, 2013).

Creating healthy boundaries is a gradual process; it can take time for both partners to adapt to the other person’s limits. Healthy boundaries will grow, change over time, and protect or even strengthen your romantic relationship as you continue to take the time to respect each other.

Resources to learn more:

Establishing Boundaries: Essential or Selfish?

Personal Boundary Worksheet

How to Respect and Set Boundaries with your Spouse

References

Cosio D. (2014). How to set boundaries with chronic pain patients. *The Journal of family practice*, 63(3 Suppl), S3–S8.

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Selva, J. (2021, February 24). How to set healthy boundaries: 10 examples + PDF worksheets. Retrieved from <https://positivepsychology.com/great-self-care-setting-healthy-boundaries/>

Therapist Aid. (2016). What are personal boundaries? Retrieved from: https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/relationships_personal_boundaries.pdf

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