

# Tips for Setting Boundaries



We often place a lot of value on being liked and feeling accepted. These are extremely important for creating community and filling our lives with people who care about us. However, when the need to please becomes more important than speaking up for ourselves and asking for what we need, we can fall into a routine that can be bad for our mental health.

It can also be important to set boundaries with ourselves. Sometimes we push ourselves in ways that can do more harm than good. When this happens, we might end up getting burnt out or physically or emotionally exhausted. Getting burnt out means you are so tired that you feel you can't do things anymore. When burnout happens, it can be difficult to do our day-to-day activities.

All boundary setting really means is that we are taking ownership for our needs and expressing our needs to others. Boundaries can be extremely valuable for our mental health. A lot of anxiety can stem from being put in situations that make us feel uncomfortable or having things asked of us that we don't feel we are able to handle. When we are loose with our boundaries, we aren't speaking up for our needs and those needs can be the very thin line between being ok and not being ok.

It can be hard to know what to do when it comes to setting boundaries. This resource is designed to provide you with some communication tips and strategies for boundary setting with people in your life and with yourself that you might find helpful! Here are a few scenarios that you might find yourself in where boundary setting might be useful and some strategies you can put into practice if you find yourself in that situation:

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## **Scenario 1: Setting boundaries with friends**

You're having a bad mental health day. You didn't sleep very much the night before because you've been stressed and anxious about a test you have coming up. You really want a quiet night alone to yourself to collect your thoughts and try to relax enough to go to sleep early. However, you had made plans to get together with a friend. You know this friend has a tendency to get mad or take it personally when you cancel, but you really don't feel up to being around anyone.

### How do I set boundaries?

You call your friend and explain the situation. You tell them that you would've loved to hang out with them, but you really need a night to yourself. When they start asking questions and seem to be getting upset, you reassure them that it has absolutely nothing to do with them and you set up a time to reschedule your hangout for the weekend. They agree and thank you for being honest.

## **Scenario 2: Setting boundaries with family**

You're going through a really hard time at school. You feel stressed and overwhelmed. Your parents really want to understand what's going on for you and why you've been so upset, but you don't feel ready to talk about it. They continue to ask, but you know you're just not ready to share.

### How do I set boundaries?

You start by thanking them for their support and their strong desire to be there for you. You give them a general idea of what is going on and that you're having a hard time in school, but tell them that you're not ready to talk about any of the specifics just yet. You assure them that you will reach out to them when you are ready to talk.

## **Scenario 3: Setting boundaries with adults**

You're on a sports team and your coach really wants you to play at the game on Friday, but you haven't been feeling very well. You know that if you push yourself physically, it could make you feel worse and you don't want to get sick.

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## How do I set boundaries?

You let your coach know that you're really not up to playing in the game on Friday. You let them know what your symptoms are and tell them that you don't want to push yourself too hard because it could make you feel a lot worse.

## **Scenario 4: Setting boundaries with yourself**

You have four exams and two big papers due next week. It is crunch time. You've been staying up late studying and writing and you're starting to feel exhausted and burnt out. You try to push through because these exams and papers are worth a lot, but the harder you push yourself, the less productive you become.

## How do I set boundaries?

You remind yourself that when you get burnt out, it becomes impossible to be productive. You decide that you're going to take a night off working and studying to relax so you can be more productive tomorrow.

Setting boundaries is something many of us have to practice. For some people, boundary setting comes easily and they can do so without having to think about it. For others, boundary setting takes time and patience with ourselves to get good at. But it is an important thing to work on, as it can be extremely valuable for our mental and emotional wellbeing to set boundaries with ourselves and others.