RELATIONSHIPS & SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Healthy Boundaries

Clearer limits. Kinder communication. Stronger self-respect.

Boundaries help define what you are willing to do, what you need, and how you will take care of yourself when something does not work for you. They are not a way to control another person.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Recognise when a boundary is needed
- Communicate limits without a lengthy defence
- Respond to pushback while staying respectful

Take your time

You can read this guide in one sitting or return to the exercises whenever you need them. No worksheet needs to be completed perfectly.

UNDERSTAND

What this can look like

A boundary is about your action

A request tells someone what you would appreciate. A boundary describes what you will do if a limit is crossed. Example: “Please ask before visiting” is a request; “If we have not arranged a visit, I will not be able to host” is a boundary.

Feelings offer information

Resentment, dread, exhaustion and anxiety can be useful signals that something needs attention. They are clues, not proof that another person has done something wrong.

Respect goes both ways

A healthy boundary respects your needs and the other person’s agency. You can say no. The other person may feel disappointed. Neither of you must agree for a limit to be valid.

Safety changes the approach

When someone threatens, intimidates or controls you, direct confrontation can increase risk. Prioritise safety and specialist support rather than trying to negotiate a “better boundary”.

Notice with curiosity

These are explanations, not labels or tests. You do not need to recognise yourself in every example for the guide to be useful.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Three things to try

Name the limit

Ask: What is difficult? What value or need is involved? What action is actually within my control? Turn this into one short sentence.

Use a calm script

“I care about our relationship, and I am not available for conversations where we are shouting. I will take a break and return when we can speak more calmly.”

Follow through gently

A boundary is clearer when your action matches your words. Start with something small that you can realistically do. You do not need a perfect explanation.

An important reminder

Boundaries are not a guarantee that others will change. They are a way of being clearer about your choices. In unsafe relationships, seek specialist support.

IN REAL LIFE

Words and actions to practise

When someone wants an immediate reply

“I may not answer messages during working hours. I will respond when I am available.”

When you are asked to take on more

“I cannot commit to that this week. I can let you know next month if anything changes.”

When a discussion becomes hurtful

“I want to discuss this, but not while we are insulting each other. I will step away and return later.”

Start smaller than you think

Choose one example that feels safe, doable and relevant. Practising a small change consistently can be more useful than attempting everything at once.

REFLECTION & PRACTICE

A few gentle questions

1. Where do I say yes when I really mean no?

2. What limit would protect my energy, time, privacy or emotional safety?

3. What short sentence could I practise this week?

Permission to pause

You can reflect privately, talk through a question with someone safe, or leave it unanswered. There is no “correct” response.

BRING IT TOGETHER

Small steps are still progress

Notice

Choose

Practise

TRY THIS WEEK

1. Notice one bodily or emotional sign that a limit is needed.
2. Write one boundary in a single sentence.
3. Try it in a low-risk conversation.
4. Reflect on what felt difficult, without criticising yourself.

Keep safety in view

Boundaries are not a guarantee that others will change. They are a way of being clearer about your choices. In unsafe relationships, seek specialist support.

FURTHER READING & REFERENCES

Centre for Clinical Interventions (WA), Assertiveness
https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Assertiveness

Original educational client resource. Not a diagnosis or a substitute for personalised counselling, healthcare or crisis support. For enquiries: hello@jacquihackett.com.