

SETTING MONEY BOUNDARIES

BOUNDARY SETTING

Setting a boundary means clearly defining and communicating your expectations or personal limits to protect your well-being. Boundaries help create mutual respect, foster healthy relationships, and prevent feelings of resentment or frustration. They can help maintain your emotional, physical, and mental health by ensuring that your needs and values are respected.

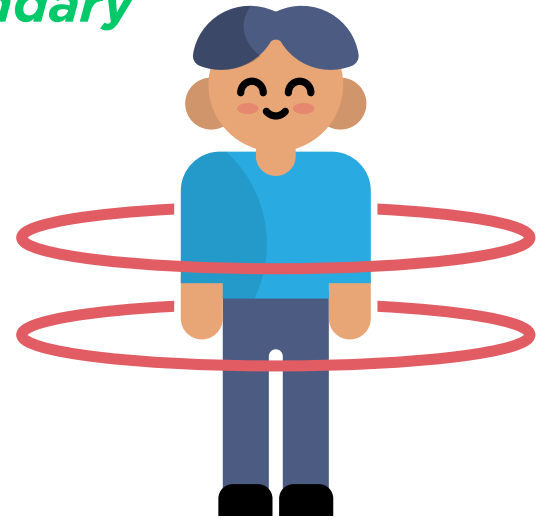
Boundaries are all about protecting your relationships. **When we don't have financial boundaries, we're more likely to feel resentment towards the other person, which will damage our relationship.**

How we set boundaries matters a lot, especially if we're trying to maintain a relationship with someone we care about. We can easily slide into setting boundaries in ways that harms relationships rather than helps them. This worksheet is a guide to walk you through the key pieces of setting financial boundaries in a way that protects your relationships.

How to Know If I Need to Set a Boundary

Financial boundaries are essential when shared financial responsibilities lack clarity or you begin to feel resentment or discomfort. Here are some key signs you may need to set a boundary:

- **Resentment or frustration:** You feel taken advantage of, or you believe the other person isn't holding up their financial responsibilities.
- **Confusion:** There is uncertainty around what each person is expected to contribute financially.
- **Inconsistent or unfair contributions:** One person may be shouldering more of the financial burden than the other(s), leading to feelings of inequality.
- **Avoidance of financial discussions:** Conversations around money are being ignored or avoided, creating tension.
- **Overstepping:** You feel that someone is being overly critical or controlling of your financial choices.



It's important to address these issues proactively to protect the relationship in the long term.

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KEEP IN MIND

Boundaries Protect Relationships

Boundaries prevent resentment from building and keep the relationship healthier. Boundaries are protective; they're not about being vindictive or pushing people out of your life. They are not ultimatums, punishments, rigid walls, or selfish acts.

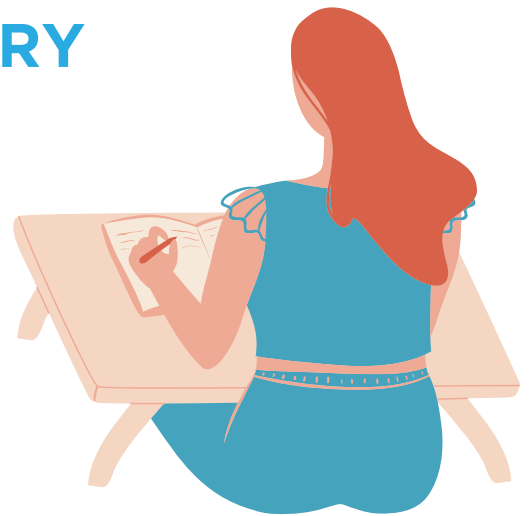
You Can't Control Others' Reactions

Understand that you can't control how others react when you set a boundary. They may not take the boundary well, but that doesn't mean it isn't necessary.

STEPS TO SETTING A BOUNDARY

#1: Reflect and Prepare

Before setting a financial boundary, take time to reflect on your needs and expectations. First, consider using the Feelings Wheel to help you identify your emotions around the situation or the other person's behavior. From there, reflect on your needs underneath those emotions. Ask yourself what changes you'd need to see in your situation or your relationship to feel differently and get your needs met.



What emotions am I feeling about this financial situation and what are my needs underneath?

What behaviors would need to change for me to feel differently and get my needs met?

Example:

I feel hurt and ashamed when my mom makes negative comments about how I spend money. I've worked really hard for my money and need to feel like I can confidently make my own money choices without anyone else's approval and not dread my mom coming over. I would need her to stop being so judgmental and commenting on what I've "wasted" money on.

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The needs and emotions you've noticed can now help you identify your boundary. Identify a behavior change you'd like the other person to make that could be observed. In other words, if a camera was watching for a behavior change, what would the camera see to know that change is or isn't happening? Boundaries need to be observable by a third party and the behavior/s easily identifiable. For example, we couldn't necessarily observe whether someone's mom has stopped **judging** how they spend money, but we could observe whether or not the mom has stopped **making comments** on how this person spends money.



What boundary would help meet my needs?

What is this financial boundary meant to protect or achieve?

What would you SEE specifically that would tell you whether this boundary is being kept or crossed?

Example:

I want my mom to **not make any comments about my purchases, whether she thinks they're good or bad**. This boundary is meant to prevent my resentment and fear of my mom coming over to spend time with me and my kids, because then I'll know I don't have to hide things in my house or brace myself for her negative comments. I want this boundary to protect her relationship with me and her grandkids. If she kept this boundary, I would see no more comments about things I buy.

Next, consider how safe this relationship is. How do I anticipate this person will respond? Of course, we don't always know how people are going to respond, but do I have any data on what I can expect? Do I anticipate them being able to listen to me, validate, or understand? Do I expect resistance and how much? Being prepared mentally and emotionally for potential responses can help us have the courage to still follow through with our boundaries.

How safe is this relationship?

How do I expect this person to respond?

How do I want to respond to stick to my boundary and protect our relationship if the other person reacts poorly?

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Example:

Our relationship isn't unsafe, but it's also not very authentic. If I bring this up to my mom, she will probably shut down and accuse herself of being a bad mom. I want to respond by telling her that this isn't about being a good or bad mom, it's about me wanting to have a good relationship with her, which is why this boundary is important to me.

Last, think about the goals you have for your relationship. Is the goal that you maintain this relationship if they respect the boundary? Is it up in the air or have you decided that this relationship isn't worth keeping? In any case, it'll change the way that you consider setting these boundaries. Also consider what you're willing to tolerate and what you're not. What will you do to protect yourself and the relationship if the boundary isn't kept? This will help you understand what types of outcomes you may need to be prepared for and will give you a more clearly defined view of what you're asking for and why. Keep in mind that every successful boundary needs natural consequences in order for the importance of the boundary to be emphasized.

**Is this a relationship I want to keep?
If so, will I still keep it if they don't
respect this boundary?**

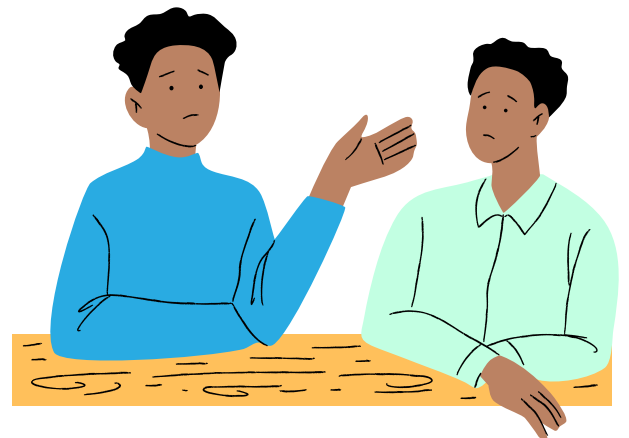
**What actions will you take to protect
yourself and your relationship if the
boundary isn't kept?**

Example:

This is a relationship I really want to keep and I'll keep it even my mom doesn't keep my boundary. BUT my mom won't be allowed over to my house anymore and we may have to decrease our time we spend at her house.

#2: Set Up the Conversation

Wow that's some great reflection, and it's about to pay off! You're ready to have the conversation. Depending on your relationship with the person you'd like to set a boundary with, there are various options for how you might set up the conversation.



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If it's a more intense boundary with higher stakes consequences (e.g., if you can't start paying rent, you'll need to find another place to stay), consider giving the other person a heads up beforehand that you'd like to have a talk about your financial arrangement. If it's a less intense boundary with lower stakes consequences (e.g., I won't be able to eat out with you like normal this month because I'm not getting enough shifts at work), you could probably let the other person know throughout the normal course of your time together. You know the person and your relationship best and can decide whether giving them a heads up would be helpful.

Example:

"Hey mom, me and the kids are excited to see you for dinner tonight! While you're here, can we talk about something I think could make our relationship better?"

You also don't have to have a sit-down conversation if doesn't feel safe. Consider which of the following options of how to communicate your boundary feels safest and most helpful for you and your relationship: Text, letter or email, casual conversation, or a more formal sit-down.

#3: Have the Conversation

When it's time to have the conversation or send the text/letter/email, take some time to regulate yourself beforehand. Remind yourself that you have a plan and have the skills to get regulated (we highly recommend our [mindfulness worksheet](#) if you need a refresher).

Here's a structure we recommend for having the conversation:

1 **Tell the other person what you need in the conversation.** Do you need them to put their phone down and fully listen? Do you need them to hold off from making comments until the end? Let them know at the beginning. **Example:** "Mom, while we're talking, I'm going to need us to turn off the TV. I also need you to hold back from asking questions or making comments until I'm done talking. Can we do that?"

2 **Reinforce your relationship stability.** Tell them why you appreciate the relationship and why it's important to you. Emphasize that these are the reasons why it's worth having hard conversations like this one. **Example:** "I love you so much and I love that we live close enough now for you to visit. I really like spending time with you and want our relationship to be as good as can be, which is why I wanted us to talk today."

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3 **Only if appropriate and safe enough, tell them your feelings around the behavior you need to set a boundary around.** If it's safe, this can help increase understanding. However, you absolutely do not have to justify your boundary (ever) or share about your feelings when it isn't safe to do so. **Example:** "I've been feeling hurt and judged by the comments you make about how I spend money. It makes me feel resentful and hesitant to invite you over to the house."

4 **Outline the boundary, in other words, the specific behavior you're asking of them.** Tell them as clearly as possible what behavior needs to change. **Example:** "From here on out, I need you to not make comments about my purchases or how I spend my money."

5 **Outline what it would mean if the person kept the boundary.** Share with them the positive things that keeping the boundary would reinforce. **Example:** "If you don't make comments about my purchases, it would make me feel safer and want to spend more time with you and invite you over to the house more often."

6 **Outline the expected consequences if the boundary is not followed.** This will make it clear what will happen if the boundary isn't kept and can help you stick to your plan. **Example:** "However, if you keep making comments about my purchases, you won't be invited to my home and I might not be able to see you as often."

7 **Reinforce relationship stability once more.** Give the other person a second reminder of why you're asking for these changes. It's to protect yourself and your relationship. **Example:** "Again, this is important to me because I really care about our relationship and want you to spend time at our house, which is why I'm bringing this up."

8 **Only if appropriate and safe enough, let them ask questions about specific boundary.** The other person might need some clarification and, if safe, giving them space to ask questions can help you both be on the same page about the boundary. **Example:** "Would it be okay if I make comments about how cute something is you bought?" "Yes mom, you can comment on something I bought being cute, just please don't comment on whether you think I should or shouldn't have purchased it."



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#4: After the Conversation

Take time to regulate yourself and give yourself a HUGE pat on the back for having the hard conversation. You just did something really brave and advocated for yourself and your relationship!

If safe to do so, take some time to do something enjoyable with the person you set the boundary with to show that you do value the relationship.

Take some time to reflect on the following:

How did you feel setting the boundary?

Did things go as you expected?

How did it feel to advocate for yourself?

Are there any other boundaries you might need to set with this person?



You should know: You don't have to keep the same boundaries forever. Some boundaries will never be flexible, and other boundaries might be flexible over time.

How would you know IF this boundary has achieved its purposes? How would you know IF this boundary could or needs to be flexed or changed?



By setting financial boundaries, you can protect yourself and the relationships you care about. Keep practicing and building the muscle of advocating for yourself. You've got this!