



Boundaries

Setting healthy personal boundaries is necessary to promote a positive self-image and communicate who we are. Personal boundaries are the physical and emotional limits we establish to avoid being manipulated or violated by others. Boundaries help us define who we are.

Setting personal boundaries is part of taking responsibility for who you are and taking control of your life. Sometimes recovering offenders have problems setting boundaries. They might have had poor boundaries during incarceration or in antisocial situations. These boundaries may not be appropriate in a prosocial lifestyle.

Here are some ways to establish healthy boundaries:

1. Set clear and decisive limits that support your intended lifestyle. Once you set your boundaries, stick with them.
2. Recognize that your needs are important. Offenders sometimes think they need to put the needs of everyone in the family ahead of their own. Family members also need to learn to be responsible for themselves.
3. Learn to say no. Often recovering offenders try to please everyone. They tend to put themselves last as they try to re-establish themselves back in the family unit. It is OK to take care of yourself.
4. Identify what behaviors you find unacceptable. Don't be afraid to let others know when you need space. It's healthy to have your own space once in a while, as long as you're not isolating.
5. Trust yourself. You are the one who knows you best. Know what you need, want, and value.

Do any of these signs of unhealthy boundaries apply to you? (Check those that do.)

- Going against personal values to please others
- Taking as much as you can from others emotionally
- Letting others define you
- Expecting others to fill your needs

BOUNDARIES | *continued*

- _____ Feeling guilty when you say no
- _____ Falling apart so others can take care of you
- _____ Touching someone inappropriately or without permission
- _____ Letting someone touch you or accepting sexual advances that you don't want
- _____ Letting others talk you into things you know are wrong
- _____ Staying in relationships with angry, critical people
- _____ Being terrified of abandonment
- _____ Confusing love and pity

Based on the checklist above, what are the boundaries you feel you need to change?

What are the ways you plan to change your unhealthy boundaries?

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