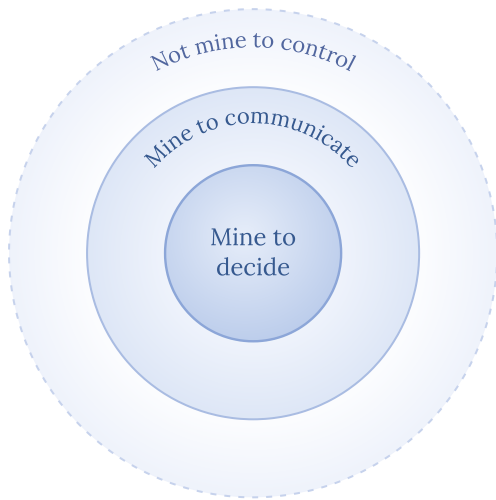


The Boundary Map

Knowing what is mine, and saying it clearly

A boundary protects what matters to you: your time, energy, body, values and wellbeing. Healthy boundaries are not walls. They help you place your energy where it is useful, **communicate clearly**, and let go of what was never yours to control.



my energy belongs closest to the centre

THE CENTRE

Mine to decide

My own choices and actions: how I respond, how I spend my time and energy, what I say yes or no to.

This is where my power lives.

THE MIDDLE RING

Mine to communicate

My needs, feelings and limits, said clearly and kindly, even if others respond differently.

I can ask; I can say no; I can say what I will do.

THE OUTER RING

Not mine to control

Other people's feelings, reactions, choices and beliefs, and the past. I can influence, but not decide.

I can let this go.

01 Three kinds of boundary

Adapted from Minuchin's family systems work



Rigid · a wall

Keeps others out. Rarely asks for help or lets people close; can feel safe, but lonely.



Clear · a garden gate

Opened and closed by choice. Close connection alongside a secure sense of self; able to say yes and no.



Diffuse · an open field

Hard to tell where I end and others begin. Taking on their feelings; finding it hard to say no.

02 Signs a boundary might be needed

Resentment

Irritation or exhaustion after certain interactions.

The quiet no

Saying yes when you'd rather say no, then feeling uneasy.

Over-explaining

Justifying, apologising, or managing their reaction.

Losing yourself

Your own needs keep slipping to the bottom of the list.

03 Reflection

Where could I take more responsibility for my own choices?

What do I need to communicate more clearly, and to whom?

What am I ready to let go of trying to control?

I can't control everything, but I can choose where I put my energy.

Putting a Boundary into Words

Clear, brief and kind

Boundaries don't need to be long or defensive. The clearest ones describe **what you will do**, rather than trying to control what someone else does.

04 A request or a boundary?

A boundary is about my own actions

A REQUEST · ASKS THEM TO CHANGE	A BOUNDARY · STATES WHAT I WILL DO
"Please stop shouting at me." They may, or may not.	"If the shouting continues, I'll end the call and we can talk later."
"You need to stop calling me at work."	"I won't take personal calls at work. I'll call you back after five."

05 Ways to say it

A simple way

Three parts, in a few words

NAME IT

"I'm not able to take this on right now."

KEEP IT BRIEF

"I'd prefer we talk about this another time."

HOLD IT KINDLY

"I understand this is disappointing, and the answer is still no."

DEAR MAN

A research-based structure from DBT interpersonal effectiveness skills

D **Describe** the facts: "We agreed I'd leave at six..."

E **Express** how you feel: "...and I feel stretched when I stay late."

A **Assert** clearly: "I'm not able to stay tonight."

R **Reinforce**: "Leaving on time helps me do my best work."

M **Mindful · Appear confident · Negotiate**: stay on track, keep a steady voice, stay open to options that still respect the limit.

When someone pushes back

- **Acknowledge, then repeat**: "I hear that you're upset, and my answer is the same."
- **Keep it short**: the more you justify, the more there is to argue with.
- **Follow through**: do what you said you would, calmly.
- **Expect some discomfort**: guilt often shows up. It doesn't mean you did wrong.

Common boundary myths

"A good boundary won't upset anyone."

Others may feel disappointed. That doesn't make the boundary wrong.

"Setting boundaries is selfish."

Clear limits often protect relationships from resentment.

"If I have to repeat it, I failed."

Most boundaries need repeating, calmly and consistently.

06 My boundary plan

Prepare one boundary before your next session

The situation...

What I'll say...

Who can support me...

What I need, or what matters to me...

What I'll do if it isn't respected...

How I'll look after myself afterwards...



Safety first. If setting a boundary could lead to threats, violence or harm, your safety matters more than the boundary. Please seek support and plan together before speaking up.

SOURCES

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