

**SIGNS of
HEALTHY & UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES
in RELATIONSHIPS**

Unhealthy Boundaries:

Trusting no-one - trusting anyone - black & white thinking

Telling all

Talking at an intimate level on the first meeting

Falling in love with a new acquaintance

Being overwhelmed or preoccupied by a person

Acting on one's first sexual impulse

Being sexual for the partner and not oneself

Not noticing when someone displays inappropriate boundaries

Not noticing when someone invades your boundaries

Accepting food, gifts, touching and/or sex that you don't want

Touching a person without asking

Taking as much as you can get for the sake of getting

Giving as much as you can give for the sake of giving

Allowing someone to take as much as they can from you

Letting others direct your life

Letting others describe your reality

Letting others define you

Believing others can anticipate your needs

Expecting others to fill your needs automatically

Falling apart so someone will take care of you

Self abuse

Sexual and physical abuse

Food abuse

Healthy Boundaries:

Appropriate trust

Revealing a little of yourself at a time, then checking to see how the other person responds to your sharing

Moving step-by-step into intimacy

Putting a new acquaintanceship on hold until you check for compatibility

Deciding whether a potential relationship will be good for you

Staying focused on your own growth & recovery

Weighing the consequence before acting on sexual impulse

Being sexual when you want to be sexual - concentrating largely on your own pleasure rather than monitoring reactions of your partner

Maintaining personal values despite what others want

Noticing when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries

Noticing when someone invades your boundaries

Saying "NO" to food, gifts, touch and/or sex you don't want

Asking a person before touching them

Respect for others - not taking advantage of someone's generosity

Self-respect - not giving too much in hope that someone will like you

Not allowing someone to take advantage of your generosity

Trusting your own decisions

Defining your truth, as YOU see it

Knowing who you are and what you want

Recognizing that friends and partners are not mind-readers

Clearly communicating your wants and needs (and recognizing that you may be turned down, but you can ask)

Becoming your own loving parent

Talking to yourself with gentleness, humour, love and respect

Basic Strategies for Behaving More Assertively

Do you have trouble expressing your feelings and opinions to others? Learn to stand up for yourself! Assertion training can help you express yourself in a manner that neither sells yourself short nor threatens others. Apply assertiveness strategies to learning how to stand up for your rights, making and refusing requests, giving and receiving compliments and expressing anger constructively.

Basic Strategies for Behaving More Assertively

1. Identify your personal rights, wants, and needs.
2. Identify how you FEEL about a particular situation, (e.g., "I feel angry", "I feel embarrassed", "I like you".) In identifying your feelings about the situation, use sensory descriptions that help to capture how you feel, (e.g., "I feel stepped on", "I feel like I'm on cloud nine".) Report what kind of action the feeling urges you to do, (e.g., "I feel like hugging you".)
3. In describing your feelings, use "I" messages; own your message. Use these "I" statements to express your feelings instead of evaluating or blaming others, (e.g., "I feel hurt" vs. "You hurt me" or "You are inconsiderate".)
4. Connect your feeling statement with some specific behavior in the other person, (e.g., "I felt hurt when you left without saying goodbye" vs. "I felt hurt because you were inconsiderate".)
5. Be direct -- deliver your message to the person for whom it was intended. Express your request in one or two easy to understand sentences.
6. Try not to make assumptions about what the other person is thinking or feeling, about what their motives are, or about how they may react. Check things out with them first.

7. Avoid sarcasm, character assassination, or absolutes (e.g., using words like, "you never...", "you always...", "you constantly...", etc.).
8. Avoid labeling.
9. Avoid statements beginning with "Why?", "You...". This may put the other person on the defensive.
10. Ask for feedback: "Am I being clear?", "How do you see this situation?". Asking for feedback helps correct any misperceptions you may have, as well as helping others realize that you are open to communication, and are expressing an opinion, feeling, or desire, rather than a demand.
11. Evaluate your expectations. Are they reasonable? Be willing to compromise.

Compiled by Pauline McNeill.

