# The Boundary Challenge

Understanding, Communicating, and Respecting Personal Boundaries

Participant Activity Packet • Designed for a 60-minute facilitated group

## What you will practice

Recognize boundaries, requests, and controlling statements; communicate personal limits respectfully; respond to resistance; and respect the boundaries of others.

## How to participate

Read the completed example, discuss your assigned scenario with your team, and use the worksheets to develop a respectful response. You may choose to write instead of role-play. Use fictional examples and avoid sharing private information about other people.

## Completed example: A Friend in Need

Jamie and Chris have been friends for years. Chris often calls Jamie for emotional support, including late at night. Jamie works early mornings and has been losing sleep. At 11:30 p.m., Chris calls again. Jamie explains the need to rest. Chris replies, “I thought you were my friend. I guess you don’t care about what I’m going through.” Jamie feels guilty and worries that saying no will damage the friendship.

## Identify the boundary

Type: Time, emotional availability, and personal well-being.
Need: Adequate sleep and reasonable limits on late-night conversations.
Challenge: Jamie feels responsible for Chris’s disappointment.

## Compare possible responses

Unhelpful: “You’re always calling me with your problems. Stop being so selfish.” This may escalate conflict and obscure Jamie’s legitimate need.

Assertive: “I care about you, and I need to sleep before work. I can’t talk late tonight, but I can talk tomorrow afternoon.”

If Chris pushes back: “I understand you’re upset. I still need to rest tonight. We can talk tomorrow.” Jamie can then end the conversation respectfully.

Key takeaway: A boundary describes your own limits and actions. It does not require the other person to agree.

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# Scenario Cards

Facilitator: assign one scenario per team. Participants: read the card and complete the team worksheet.

## A — The Financial Request

A family member repeatedly asks Avery to lend money. Avery is trying to pay off personal debts but feels guilty refusing.

Focus: Financial boundaries and guilt

## B — The Unanswered Message

Taylor sends a friend several messages. The friend explains that they cannot always respond immediately, but Taylor feels rejected and wants constant reassurance.

Focus: Digital communication and respecting others' boundaries

## C — Pressure to Participate

During a group activity, a participant is invited to discuss a personal experience. The participant prefers not to share but worries about being judged.

Focus: Privacy, autonomy, and respectful participation

## D — Workplace Expectations

A coworker repeatedly asks Riley to stay late and complete unfinished assignments. Riley wants to be helpful but is falling behind on personal responsibilities.

Focus: Time boundaries and assertive communication

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# Team Worksheet

Team: _____ Scenario: _____

## 1. Identify the boundary

What type of boundary is involved? What does the character need to protect or communicate?

_____

_____

## 2. Identify the difficulty

Why might the character struggle to establish or respect this boundary?

_____

_____

## 3. Communicate assertively

Write a respectful statement that expresses the character's needs and what they will do.

_____

_____

## 4. Respond to resistance

What could the character say or do if the other person becomes upset or continues the behavior?

_____

_____

## 5. Respect the other person

What responsibilities does the character have toward the other person's boundaries?

_____

_____

## 6. Reflect

What is the difference between setting a boundary and trying to control someone?

_____

_____

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# Boundary, Request, or Control?

For each statement, circle one answer. Discuss why context and behavior matter.

### 1. “I won’t continue this conversation while we’re shouting. I’m going to take a break.”

○ Boundary ○ Request ○ Control

### 2. “You’re not allowed to spend time with your other friends.”

○ Boundary ○ Request ○ Control

### 3. “Would you please call before coming over?”

○ Boundary ○ Request ○ Control

### 4. “If you keep borrowing my belongings without permission, I won’t lend them to you anymore.”

○ Boundary ○ Request ○ Control

### 5. “You have to answer my messages immediately or you don’t care about me.”

○ Boundary ○ Request ○ Control

### 6. “I’m not comfortable lending money right now.”

○ Boundary ○ Request ○ Control

## Discussion

Can a request become controlling? What makes a boundary different from a demand?

_____

_____

_____

Note: Some statements can depend on context. The facilitator will discuss suggested classifications; this is not a diagnostic test.

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# Communication Practice

Team / Participant: _____ Scenario: _____

## Step 1: Express the boundary

Optional structure: “I understand _____. However, I need _____. If _____ happens, I will _____.”

Our boundary statement:

_____

_____

_____

## Step 2: Respond to resistance

Imagine the other person responds with disappointment, frustration, or disagreement.

Their response:

_____

_____

Our respectful reply:

_____

_____

## Step 3: Respect someone else’s boundary

Imagine someone communicates a boundary that disappoints you.

Their boundary:

_____

_____

Our respectful response:

_____

_____

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# Reflection and Closing

## What made communicating a boundary difficult?

_____

_____

## How can you distinguish your own needs from another person’s choices?

_____

_____

## What could you do if a boundary is repeatedly disregarded?

_____

_____

## How can you acknowledge disappointment without pressuring someone to change their boundary?

_____

_____

## One skill I can practice this week

_____

_____

_____

## Key takeaway

Healthy boundaries involve communicating personal limits and making choices about our own participation. We can express needs respectfully without requiring others to agree, and we can respect another person’s limits even when disappointed.

Safety note: No one is required to role-play, disclose personal experiences, or confront an unsafe person. In abusive or dangerous situations, prioritize safety planning and appropriate professional support.

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