Setting Personal Boundaries

Personal boundaries are the lines that we draw and the agreements that we set with others. I imagine a strong but flexible hula hoop carried around my body. I can move it aside and let someone close, or I can push it out and make space if I need to. The hula hoop can protect my body, my feelings and my rights. It can also connect me to others.

Is it hard for you to say no or yes?
Are you O.K. when others say no to you?
Do you take on other people’s problems or pain?
Do you experience other people’s problems or pain?
Do you share personal information quickly or slowly?
Is it hard for you to share anything?
Do you tell people in your life what you want, what you need and how you feel?
Are you able to ask for help when you need it?
Is someone hurting or disrespecting you?

Our boundaries are who we are and how we have relationships with others. Personal boundaries can keep us safe. They can open up when we need to let people in.
It can become scary or confusing when our boundaries are too closely tangled with another person, or too far away from other people. You are separate from other people, but it’s O.K. for people to be close to you if you choose.

Setting boundaries can be hard. Many of us didn’t learn about setting boundaries growing up. If we have been hurt, abused, or told we’re not good enough, our personal boundaries might be bruised, broken or missing. Learning to set personal boundaries takes a lot of thought and practice. Having boundaries will help us to feel better about ourselves and our relationships.

Setting a boundary is not the same as making a threat, or trying to control someone. Setting a boundary is being clear and making a choice about what’s best for you.

I am...

Get some old magazines, some paper and some scissors. Cut out pictures and words that make you think of things about yourself. Try to answer the question ‘I am...’ in as many ways as possible.

Notice what you placed in the boundaries of the page.
**Personal Boundaries Protect Personal Rights:**

- Nobody has the right to tell me what to think, feel or do.
- I have the right to my own thoughts, values and beliefs.
- I decide what I share with others based on what feels right to me.
- I have a right to tell anyone who is hurting, abusing or disrespecting me to stop. I don’t need it.
- I have a right to love myself, respect myself and stand up for myself.
- I have a right to have relationships that feel good.
- I have a right to be me. As long as I’m not hurting anyone, I have the right to live how I want to live. This is true even if others don’t like it.
- I don’t have to feel bad because I’m not what somebody else wants me to be.
- I accept myself and where I am right now.
- I don’t have to be perfect.
PRACTICE SETTING A BOUNDARY:

1. **Name or describe the behaviour** that is not acceptable to you.
2. **Express what you need or expect** from the other person.
3. Know **for yourself what action** you will take if the person does not respect your boundaries.

"**Don’t disrespect me!**
If you won’t respect me, then stay away."

Do you agree?

We cannot make other people feel or behave a certain way. We can only control our own feelings and actions.

Some other suggestions:

- If you have a hard time saying no, look for chances to practice
- Look for mentors who have strong but flexible boundaries
- Find your own balance of alone time and time with other people
- Build a support team of people who respect your boundaries
- Write a letter to yourself encouraging yourself to set clear, strong boundaries
- Work at getting comfortable with change
- Remember that setting personal boundaries is important work because **you** are important.