



# Boundary Basics

What even is a boundary?

## Objectives

- ▲ Describe a boundary and differentiate it from a request or ultimatum
- ▲ Identify an area where you'd like to set a boundary
- ▲ Practice communicating your boundary

## Defining a Boundary

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At its most simple definition -  
a boundary is a line that marks the end of one thing and the beginning of another.

Imagine a beautiful home on a plot of land surrounded by a nice neat fence. The fence represents the boundary of the property. It is constructed to keep outside things out and inside things in. The building of and the maintenance of the boundary is the job of the property owner.

In BT, we define a relationship boundary as **a line of limits and rules that a person sets for how they want their physical, emotional, mental and digital space to be treated by others.** These boundaries clearly communicate what is acceptable or unacceptable and what we will do when the boundary is violated. It is our job as the creator of the boundary to communicate it clearly, and be consistent in our enforcement of it.

More poetically, I like to think about a boundary as **the distance at which one can love and respect themselves and the other person.**

Most of the time, when people ask for coaching about boundaries, what they are thinking of is an ultimatum or a threat. These use fear and punishment to control others' behavior. Usually they involve withdrawal of approval or acceptance, or delivery of a punishment. Usually threats are driven from emotions of anger, scarcity, fear, or judgement.



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In contrast, A boundary can be generated from a place of respect, empathy, compassion and love.

## **Boundaries do not require anything of the other party.**

It outlines what we will do and requires them to do nothing, instead relying on *yourself* to protect your physical, emotional, (or increasingly, digital) space. That's right, boundaries are about OUR actions, not THEIR actions. We are not making threats, we are clearly communicating what we will tolerate and what we will not. It's important that when setting a boundary, that we are 100% committed to enforcing it on our end without them changing a thing.

When thinking about a boundary you wish to set, it can be VERY helpful to first go through your Manual that you have for this person. Get that alllll cleaned up before you start your boundary work.

## **Describe the context of the relationship you wish to set a boundary within:**



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## What is the boundary that you would like to put into place?

It should take the form of "If you \_\_\_\_\_ then I will". Remember that you can't make anyone do anything, you can only control what you do in response.

**Ex-** *"If you come over unannounced, I will not answer the door."*

**Ex-** *"If you arrive late to the appointment time, I will extend our appointment by up to 5 minutes beyond the scheduled time, and then I will need to leave. I'll make sure we can schedule a follow up."*

**Ex-** *"If you raise your voice to me, I will leave the room."*

## Write your boundary here:

## What can you anticipate as a consequence of enforcing this boundary?

**Ex-** people might be upset with you.



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What even is a boundary?

How do you need to feel in order to clearly communicate your boundary with clarity and enforce it with consistency?

What do you need to think to create that feeling?

Does this feel accessible to you now? why or why not?

**If not, bring it for coaching!**