



## Peer Support

### Setting and Maintaining Boundaries

#### How to set a boundary

- I need to state how I feel and speak from the “I”
- I need to be honest with myself about what I can or cannot do about it
- It is not possible to change another person but I can change how I respond to them
- I have choices and what I do is my responsibility
- There are four steps to setting a boundary. The first three set the boundary and the fourth states what I will do to defend it
- It may not be necessary or appropriate to share the final step but I do need to decide upon something that I am prepared to carry out, otherwise the boundary is meaningless and I am merely reinforcing the behaviour that is distressing me
- Setting a boundary can be Scripted e.g.

1. **When you** \_\_ \_\_ Describe the other’s behaviour in a very specific and factual way, not my interpretation of the behaviour. Say “*When you roll your eyes and sigh* “. Don’t say “*When you belittle me*”
2. **I feel** \_\_ \_\_ **Describe** how I feel when the behaviour occurs. I need to own my emotions and speak form the “I”. Say “*I feel*”. Don’t say “*You make me feel*”. (With increased self-awareness I may be able to identify the reason behind my feeling e.g. “*I feel as if I have nothing of value to share with you.*”)
3. **I want** \_\_ \_\_ **Be very specific** about what I want. It must be something the other person is able to do. Say “I want you to stop rolling your eyes and listen to what I have to say. I want you to respect my right to express an opinion that is different from yours.”
4. **If you continue** \_\_ \_\_ **Describe** what steps I will take to protect the boundary that I have set. This must be realistic and something that I am willing to carry through. Say “If you continue to roll your eyes and sigh when I express an opinion that is different from yours then I will have to consider all my options, including spending my time with people who can respect my right to express my opinion“

#### How do I maintain my boundaries?

Boundaries are easiest to set and maintain in relationships that don't mean much to me. Boundaries are more difficult in relationships that matter more. This is related to my self-esteem and protection of my inner child or inner self

It is more difficult to set boundaries with those I care about the most for fear that they will leave me or not like me. Some people may respond to this by putting in strong boundaries which stop anyone getting too close and hurting their inner child

I must be willing to carry through the consequences (step 4) if someone oversteps my boundary

I may lose friends along the way. People will not want me to change and won't like or won't benefit from the changes they see in me. I may need to question whether these people are true friends. My changes may be more difficult for a close family member to accept

Boundaries between two people often need to be negotiated, especially in romantic relationships. The idea is for two people to be interdependent and not co-dependent

I may find it difficult to say no to people without feeling guilty or angry. This depends on who I am negotiating with. The closer the relationship the more difficult it may be to say no. Often this is related to my perception that people will be upset or angry, will not like me and may not want to be my friend. I fear they will abandon me leaving me sad and lonely.