

Assertiveness and Boundaries

Interpersonal boundaries are extremely important as they set clear limits on what we consider appropriate and acceptable behavior, both from ourselves and in what we expect from others. Boundaries are a way of maintaining one's sense of self and ensuring that our physical and emotional well-being is protected.

Interpersonal boundaries may include the following:

- Physical boundaries involving setting limits on what one considers to be comfortable personal space and kinds of physical contact. It also ensures protection of one's own physical safety.
- Emotional boundaries involving an expectation that others will be considerate of one's emotional well-being and psychological welfare, expecting to be treated with ample consideration, care, respect and dignity; not allowing oneself to be 'used' or treated as a means to someone else's end.



Having a healthy set of boundaries depends to a great extent on our developmental history and life experiences. If our psychological and emotional needs were met, if our need for physical and psychological autonomy was respected, if our feelings were adequately validated, if others communicated to us in ways that were respectful and dignified, then we will expect to be treated the same way by those who enter our lives thereafter. If someone crosses a boundary there will be an intuitive sense that something did not *feel* okay. We then feel confident and justified in addressing the issue and assertively setting limits on the acceptable behavior of others. We may do so by telling them, and if they do not hear us, we may choose to disconnect ourselves from that kind of relationship or set limits on the kind of interactions we are willing to have with those people in the future.

Maintaining healthy boundaries and asserting personal needs is part of self-care and self-respect. By having an expectation of how you want to be treated and by holding others accountable to that expectation, you are more likely to be treated in ways that are based on mutual respect, care, and consideration.