

Boundaries - Creating, Understanding and Respecting Them

Everyone likes their space, but sometimes it's hard to set boundaries. Boundaries are important to healthy relationships. You may want to share everything with your partner or spend a lot of time with them, but it's okay to set some clear limits or make decisions around how much is too much. Take a look at our scenarios below and learn how to tell your partner when it's time to chill out. Remember to respect other people's boundaries too - *it goes both ways!*

Scenario 1: Personal Space

Noelle and Keith are on their third date and things are going well. They are affectionate and hold hands while they walk around the movie theater. While in the movie Keith put his hand on Noelle's leg. She's okay with it, but starts to feel weird when he keeps moving his hands up. She moves away in her seat and nudges down his hand a little. Keith seems like he got the hint, but soon his hand is moving up again. Noelle likes him, but she's not sure how to tell him she's not comfortable.

Boundary Alert: Noelle tried giving non-verbal cues which is great! She should let Keith know that she's not ready for him to take it to that level. She can do so quietly in the theater; or if she feels safe enough she can grab his hand, move it down and hold it -giving him another clue of the boundary she is creating. They should definitely verbally talk this out after the movie too. She may not be comfortable, but it's important to speak up when things feel weird.

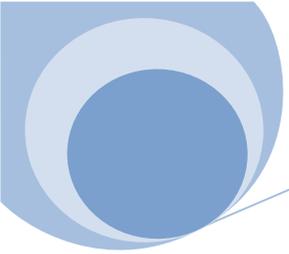
TLDR; Non-verbal cues work sometimes, but using your words is most effective to get your boundaries across.

Scenario 2: Values & Beliefs

Juan and Janel started going out a few months ago. They get along great and see a long-term relationship in their future. Janel has very strong religious beliefs, and Juan doesn't. Most times they have casual conversations about religion, but lately the conversations are more heated. Juan feels that Janel should be able to express her beliefs, but he doesn't feel like his opinion matters to Janel.

Boundary Alert: Juan is feeling like his voice doesn't matter; this is a red flag. Religion can be a sensitive topic, but with respect and understanding you should be able to communicate in ways where both sides feel heard. Janel and Juan really care for each other which helps this situation. Juan should ask Janel if they can talk about how he's feeling about their

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conversations. Sometimes you need to agree to disagree, but you should always feel like your opinion matters.

TLDR; Expressing your opinion may not change the other person's thoughts, but your voice always deserves to be heard.

Scenario 3: Texting

Isaiah and Darnell met over the summer and texted each other all day every day. They live in different cities and aren't able to see each other often. When school starts Darnell still texts Isaiah all day, but his responses are short and slow. Isaiah still likes Darnell and wants to hear from him, but Isaiah can't always text in school. He's not sure how to tell Darnell that he still wants to talk to him, but just can't talk as much.

Boundary Alert: Sometimes we forget that just because we *can* have our phones in our hands all the time, it doesn't mean we *do*! Isaiah is feeling overwhelmed by the expectation to text. Darnell may also be feeling left out by Isaiah's short texts. They should have a conversation, maybe over FaceTime or a phone call to voice their concerns. Not texting while in school is a completely fair boundary. Setting times to text or chat can go a long way in preventing anxiety around getting "I expect" texts.

TLDR; Digital boundaries are so important. Talk it out and be clear about your limits.

Scenario 4: Social Media

Jada and Tu have been going out for 3 months. They made it Facebook/Instagram official a few weeks ago. Since then, Jada has posted several pictures of the two on her social media pages. Tu is okay with being official, but doesn't want to be tagged online because she's not out yet to some of her friends and family members. Becoming official online is a big deal for Tu. She isn't ashamed of Jada, but she doesn't like the amount of pictures being posted.

Boundary Alert: Tu has strong reasons for not wanting to be tagged; she also wants Jada to know that she isn't hiding their relationship, she's just not at that point yet. And that's okay! Tu should talk to Jada and ask her not to tag her online and respect when she doesn't want to take photos. Tu needs to be clear about why she wants this boundary, and Jada should respond with care and understanding.

TLDR; If your partner has fear or worry about the things you post online, be understanding and respect their space.

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