






Personality Disorder: Setting Healthy Boundaries

What is a Healthy Boundary?

A healthy boundary is not an ultimatum for the person, but rather involves establishing limits that include offering choices with consequences. Boundaries can include physical, emotional and task-related limit setting.

5 Steps to Set Healthy Boundaries:

When you notice that your interaction with the person is not productive, effective, or mutually respectful, setting a healthy boundary is a helpful strategy.

	1) Stop	<p>Before responding, take a step back and a deep breath. Recognize that the situation needs a thoughtful approach for everyone's well-being.</p>
	2) Assess/Reflect	<p>Reflect on the situation, your own response and any risks. For example, ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What isn't working? What contributed to the situation? • Is there a current risk? To whom? What is the level of risk? • Is there a power struggle? Is the person using threatening language? • Are you noticing tension in your own body language or tone of voice? <p>Based on this information, plan your next steps.</p>
	3) Validate	<p>Acknowledge the person's feelings. For example: "You look upset."</p>
	4) Establish a Healthy Boundary	<p>Clearly and calmly articulate the limit or boundary that you are setting. Examples of starter phrases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can _____ when you _____. • When _____, then _____. • I'll help you as soon as you _____ (e.g. stop yelling)
	5) Follow Through to Build Trust	<p>Follow any boundary/limit set as this reinforces consequences for undesirable actions and encourages positive actions, builds trust, and reduces compassion fatigue.</p>

For a full reference list, please see: *Personality Disorder in Older Adults: Understanding the Person, Building Skillful Approaches and Fostering Wellness in Care Teams.*

