



# THE EAP CONNECTION

## Building Beneficial Boundaries

### *What does it mean to have boundaries?*

Boundaries are a healthy, normal, and necessary part of relationships. They set the expectations, and sometimes limitations, for what an individual is comfortable or uncomfortable with within a relationship. The concept of building boundaries applies to all types of bonds from family, friends, and coworkers to community connections and acquaintances. Personality, cultural background, upbringing, and social norms influence your boundaries, and there are differences from person to person.

### *How do you determine your own personal boundaries?*

It starts with self-awareness and being in tune with your emotions and values. Explore the things that are important to you and align these with your boundaries. There are different types of boundaries to consider: mental, emotional, physical, time, material, conversational, and internal (e.g., rest and space).

### *How do you go about communicating your boundaries?*

If you are new to setting boundaries, it may feel a bit scary or uncomfortable at first to share them with others. Think through what you want to say before saying it. Focus the message on how you are feeling, using “I” statements to express your thoughts and needs.

### *What do you do if you get pushback on your boundaries?*

You may receive pushback, especially if you are establishing boundaries in new or transitioning relationships. Reiterate your needs, keeping the response short and sweet. You can even validate others by saying that you understand why this is difficult for them but be clear that it is a boundary you need to establish. If someone continues to disrespect your boundaries, it may be time to explore the relationship dynamic further. Consider whether it's healthy for you to continue.

### *What if you are feeling unsure about your boundaries?*

It's common to look for validation when it comes to your boundaries. You might question whether your boundary is okay, whether you should feel differently about it, or whether you are mean or selfish for it. You are the only person who can determine whether your boundary is “okay.” If you find yourself questioning, consider how this boundary impacts you now and in the future?

### *Why are boundaries so important?*

Maintaining firm boundaries provides clarity for others. Plus, consistency helps demonstrate the importance of respecting the boundary. When you struggle to set boundaries, it can lead to more challenges within your relationships. Being able to effectively communicate your needs and boundaries in a relationship is essential for creating mutual understanding, respect, and support.

Your Employee Assistance Program is a great resource to reach out to for help with defining and establishing boundaries in your life. Call 1-800-222-8590 to schedule an appointment with a counselor.