Setting Boundaries
how to say "no"

Personal boundaries are the rules and limits we set for ourselves in relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say "no" to others, but they are also open to intimacy and new experiences.

Boundary Basics

Setting boundaries is a way to honor and protect what matters most to you. For example, if you value spending time with family, you can set firm boundaries around working late.

Your boundaries are yours and yours alone. Many of your boundaries might align with those who are close to you, but others will be unique.

It's inevitable that you'll encounter people or situations that challenge your boundaries. To be true to your boundaries, you have to be willing to communicate them and tolerate some pushback.

What to Say

You always have the right to say "no." Express yourself clearly so there's no doubt about what you want.

"I'm uncomfortable with this."	*"Please don't do that."*	*"Not at this time."*
"I can't do that for you."	*"This doesn't work for me."*	*"I've decided not to."*
"This is not acceptable."	*"I'm drawing the line at ___."*	*"I don't want to do that."*

What to Do

Plan ahead.

Think about what you want to say and how you'll say it before entering a difficult discussion or situation. This can help you feel more confident about your position.

Be respectful.

Avoid yelling, using put-downs, or being passive-aggressive. It's okay to be firm, but your words will be more effective if you're respectful.

Use confident body language.

Face the other person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume (not too quiet and not too loud).

Compromise.

When appropriate, listen to and consider the needs of the other person. You never *have* to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.