



# Healthy Boundaries

Department of Behavioral Health  
Central Valley Area

## Group Confidentiality Agreement

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## Group Norms

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# What Are Boundaries?

Boundaries are guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify for themselves what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around them and how they will respond when someone steps outside those limits.

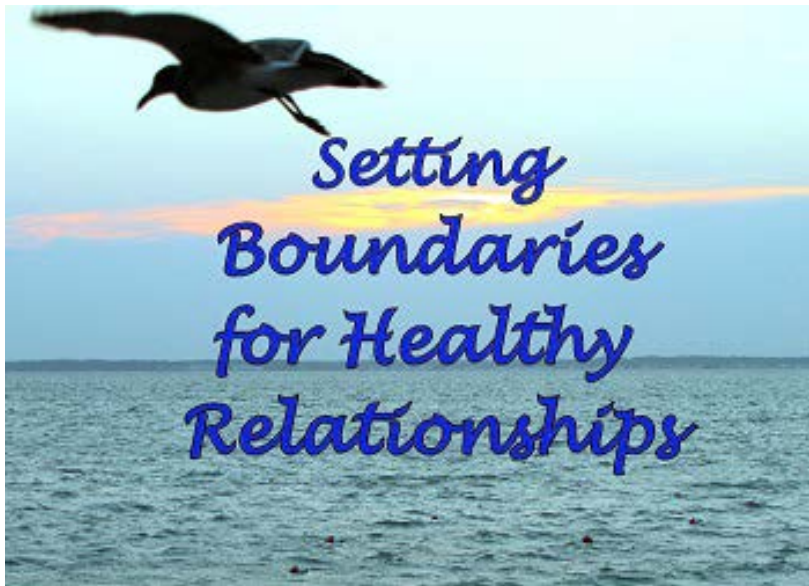


The easiest way to think about a boundary is a property line.

We have all seen “No Trespassing” signs, which send a clear message that if you violate that boundary, there will be a consequence.

Personal boundaries can be harder to define because the lines are invisible, can change, and are unique to each individual.

# Why is it important to set boundaries?



- To practice self-care and self-respect
- To communicate your needs in a relationship
- To make time and space for positive interactions
- To set limits in a relationship in a way that is health

## Physical Boundaries

- Physical boundaries provide a barrier between you and an intruding force, like a Band-Aid protects a wound from bacteria.
- Physical boundaries include your body, sense of personal space, sexual orientation, and privacy. These boundaries are expressed through clothing, shelter, noise tolerance, verbal instruction, and body language.

Inappropriate touching, such as unwanted sexual advances.

Looking through others' personal files and emails.

Not allowing others their personal space. (e.g., barging into your boss's office without knocking

# Emotional and Intellectual Boundaries

- These boundaries protect your sense of self-esteem and ability to separate your feelings from others'.
- When you have weak emotional boundaries, it's like getting caught in the midst of a hurricane with no protection.
- You expose yourself to being greatly affected by others' words, thoughts, and actions and end up feeling bruised, wounded, and battered.



# Examples of emotional and intellectual boundary invasions are:

- Not knowing how to separate your feelings from your partner's and allowing his/her mood to dictate your level of happiness or sadness (a.k.a. codependency).
- Sacrificing your plans, dreams, and goals in order to please others.
- Not taking responsibility for yourself and blaming others for your problems.

It seems obvious that no one would want his/her boundaries violated. So why do we allow it? Why do we NOT enforce or uphold our boundaries?

## Barriers to Boundary Setting

- FEAR of rejection and, ultimately, abandonment.
- FEAR of confrontation.
- GUILT.
- We were not taught healthy boundaries.
- Safety Concerns



# HEALTHY BOUNDARIES allow you to:

- Have high self-esteem and self-respect.
- Share personal information gradually, in a mutually sharing and trusting relationship.
- Protect physical and emotional space from intrusion.
- Have an equal partnership where responsibility and power are shared.
- Be assertive. Confidently and truthfully say “yes” or “no” and be okay when others say “no” to you.
- Separate your needs, thoughts, feelings, and desires from others. Recognize that your boundaries and needs are different from others.
- Empower yourself to make healthy choices and take responsibility for yourself.

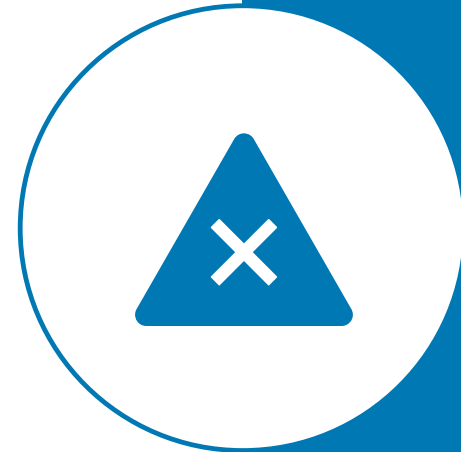


## UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES are characterized by:

- Sharing too much too soon or, at the other end of the spectrum, closing yourself off and not expressing your need and wants.
- Feeling responsible for others' happiness.
- Inability to say “no” for fear of rejection or abandonment.
- Weak sense of your own identity. You base how you feel about yourself on how others treat you.
- Disempowerment. You allow others to make decisions for you; consequently, you feel powerless and do not take responsibility for your own life.

# Tips for Setting Healthy Boundaries

- When you identify the need to set a boundary, do it clearly, calmly, firmly, respectfully, and in as few words as possible.
- Do not justify, get angry, or apologize for the boundary you are setting.
- You are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful manner. If it upset them, know it is their problem. Some people, especially those accustomed to controlling, abusing, or manipulating you, might test you. Plan on it, expect it, but remain firm. Remember, your behavior must match the boundaries you are setting. You cannot successfully establish a clear boundary if you send mixed messages by apologizing.



## Tips for Setting Healthy Boundaries cont.

- At first, you will probably feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed when you set a boundary. Do it anyway and remind yourself you have a right to self-care. Setting boundaries takes practice and determination. Don't let anxiety, fear or guilt prevent you from taking care of yourself.
- When you feel anger or resentment or find yourself whining or complaining, you probably need to set a boundary. Listen to yourself, determine what you need to do or say, then communicate assertively.
- Learning to set healthy boundaries takes time. It is a process. Set them in your own time frame, not when someone else tells you.
- Develop a support system of people who respect your right to set boundaries. Eliminate toxic persons from your life— those who want to manipulate, abuse, and control you.



# Recap

- Setting boundaries is an important part of establishing one's identity and is a crucial aspect of mental health and well-being.
- Boundaries can be physical or emotional, and they can range from being loose to rigid, with healthy boundaries often falling somewhere in between.
- Learning to show compassion and kindness to yourself is crucial in setting healthy boundaries.



## Recap

- Healthy boundaries are those boundaries that are set to make sure mentally and emotionally you are stable.
- Our boundaries might be rigid, loose, somewhere in between, or even nonexistent.
- A complete lack of boundaries may indicate that we don't have a strong identity or are enmeshed with someone else. ■
- While boundaries are often psychological or emotional, boundaries can also be physical.





# Healthy Boundaries Session 2

Healthy Relationships



## Healthy Relationships

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# What Does a Healthy Relationship Looks Like?

Most of us will have several different types of relationships in our lives ranging from family, friends and significant others.

Healthy relationships should include honesty, trust and respect.

Honesty – Communication that is open and truthful even with difficult situations

Trust – Being able to accept each other's words and giving the benefit of the doubt.

Respect – Protecting one another's privacy, valuing each others time and speaking in ways that value and validate each other

# Healthy Relationships



Relationships need to be maintained and healthy relationships take work. This applies to all relationships.

A healthy relationship should bring more happiness than stress into your life. Every relationship will have stress at times, but you want to prevent prolonged mental stress on either member of the relationship.

Examples of a healthy relationship?



# Relationship Boundaries

All healthy relationships have boundaries including those with family, friends and partners. Boundaries are guiding points for a successful relationship.

- Establishing boundaries keeps you safe. People know where they stand with you
- It allows you to give what you want of yourself to others
- Makes others conscious of their behaviors and interactions with you
- Protects us from unwanted behaviors and encourages ones that you want
- Keeps you in control of your time and efforts which leads to being effective



## Relationship Boundaries continued

- Setting boundaries requires you to develop a commitment to consistently upholding them.
- Establishes your identity and individuality in the relationship.

Other examples of boundaries in relationships?

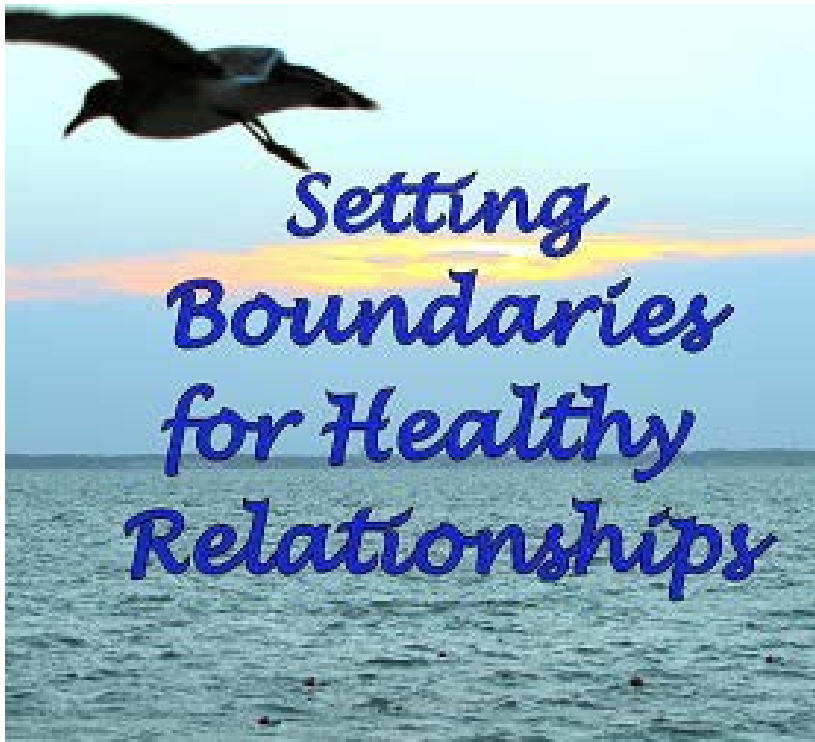


# Establishing Healthy Boundaries

## Tips for establishing healthy Boundaries:

- Being self-aware – knowing your likes/dislikes, comforts/discomforts, how you want to be treated.
- Defining your boundaries
- Communicating what you need
- Use “I” statements to help you own your own feelings
- Setting consequences and stating why the boundaries are important to you

# Implementing Healthy Boundaries



Steps to establishing healthy boundaries:

- Identify the symptoms of your boundaries currently being violated or ignored
- Identify the unhealthy thinking and beliefs that are allowing your boundaries to be ignored or violated
- Identify new healthy thinking and beliefs to encourage behavioral changes to build healthy boundaries between you and others
- Identify new healthy behaviors needed to build and sustain healthy boundaries
- Implement the healthy boundary building belief and behaviors in your life

## Rational Boundary- Building Thinking

### UNHEALTHY BELIEF

- I can never say “no” to others
- It is my duty to keep them together
- It doesn’t matter what they are doing to me. As long as I keep quiet and don’t complain, they will eventually leave me alone

### HEALTHY BOUNDARY BUILDER

- I have a right to say “no” to others if it’s an invasion of my rights or space
- I have a right to take care of myself. We all share responsibility to create the interdependency for unity
- I will stand up for myself and assert my rights to be respected and not hurt or violated. If they choose to ignore me, then I have the right to leave them or ask them to get out of my life

## Rational Boundary- Building Thinking continued...

### UNHEALTHY BELIEF

- I can never trust anyone again
- As long as I am not seen or heard, I won't be violated or hurt

### HEALTHY BOUNDARY BUILDER

- I have a right to take the risk to grow in my relationship with others. If I find my rights are being violated or ignored, I will assertively protect myself to ensure I am not hurt
- I have a right to visible, seen and heard. I will stand up for myself to ensure others can learn to respect my rights, needs and not violate my space

# Healthy Romantic Relationships

## Healthy romantic relationships consist of:

- individuals who are responsible and accountable
- depending on each other to do what they say they will
- trying your best to come through for each other.
- calling each other out gently and respectfully when mistakes are made
- both partners should feel comfortable bringing up issues, annoyances, and fears without worrying that their concerns will be ignored, or worse, retaliated against.



# Healthy Romantic Relationship Building

- **Take care of yourself and have good self-esteem independent of your relationship**
- **Respect and maintain each other's individuality**
- **Maintain relationships with friends and family**
- **Enjoy activities apart from one another**
- **Ability to express yourselves to one another without fear of consequences**
- **Ability to feel secure and comfortable**
- **Allow and encourage other healthy relationships apart**



# Healthy Romantic Relationship Building continued



- **Take interest in each other's activities**
- **Trust and be honest with each other**
- **Have the option of privacy from each other**
- **Have respect for sexual boundaries**
- **Honesty regarding sexual activity if it is a sexual relationship**
- **Resolve conflict fairly: Fighting is part of healthy relationships, the difference is how the conflict is handled. Fighting fairly is an important skill for healthier relationships.**
- **No intimate partner violence or domestic violence**

# Unhealthy Relationship



- Putting one person before the other by neglecting yourself or your partner
- Being pressured to change who you are for the other person
- Feel worried when you disagree with the other person
- Being pressure to quit activities you usually/used to enjoy
- Pressuring the other person into agreeing with you or changing to suit you better
- Being pressured to justify your actions (e.g., where did you go, who are you see)



## Unhealthy Relationship continued



- One partner feels obligated to have sex or has been forced
- Have a lack of privacy, and may be forced to share everything with the other person
- You or your partner refuse to use safer sex methods
- Arguments are not settled fairly
- Experience yelling or physical violence during an argument
- Attempt to control or manipulate each other
- Your partner attempts to control how you dress and criticizes your behaviors



If your relationship consists of some of these characteristics, it does not necessarily mean the end of that relationship. Recognize how these characteristics affect you and your partner. Have a candid conversation with your partner about working on and improving the negative aspects of your relationship to benefit both of you.



## **Romantic Relationship Boundaries to Consider:**

- Recognizing and discussing triggers from past relationships
- Have clear expectations of what you and your partner expect from each other
- Discuss behaviors that are acceptable during an argument
- Discuss and establish appropriate social media behaviors and boundaries
- Establishing healthy time alone and date nights together as a couple
- Discuss each other's future plans and goals



**Relationships are a necessary part of healthy living, and there is no such thing as a perfect relationship.**

**Family, friends and romantic relationships have the potential to enrich our lives as well as add enjoyment. However, these same relationships can cause discomfort and sometimes even cause harm.**

**Ultimately, healthy relationships require clear-cut parameters.**





Healthy Boundaries  
Session 3

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Communication



# Communication

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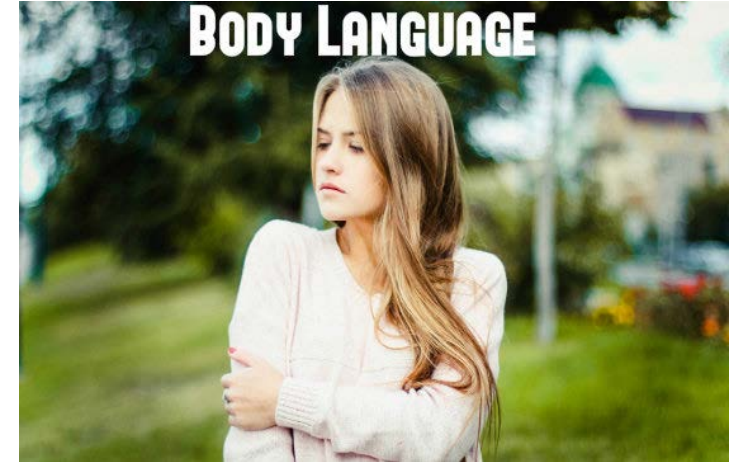


# The Importance of Communicating Well

- Communicating well is important to your well-being. Effective communication enhances your health and self-esteem, improves your mood, and decreases stress.
- How do you feel when you are communicating effectively? What is it like when someone really listens to you with full attention?
- When communication breaks down, it may affect your health. Evidence suggests that when you are not communicating effectively, the heart rate speeds up and cholesterol and blood sugar levels rise. You may have headaches, backaches, and digestive problems.
- How do you feel when you are not communicating effectively? What is it like when you are speaking to someone and you feel that person is not listening to you or understanding what you're saying?
- *A key to being an effective communicator is being a **good listener**.*

# Learn to Listen Well

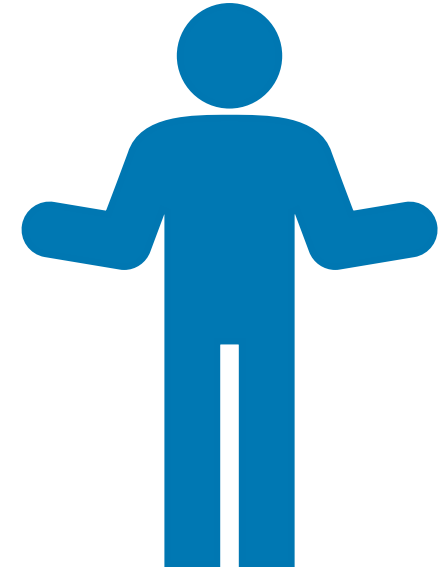
- Listening is a communication skill that takes practice and requires focus. Listening is about more than just hearing words. It also requires being aware of body language.
- Research shows that more than half of what we communicate is not conveyed by our words, but by our **body language**. When we nod, smile, sigh, or laugh, we are sending powerful messages.
- Your body language is a strong indicator of how well you are listening to a conversation. If your posture is laid back, it says to the speaker that you could be thinking about something else; perhaps you're really not that interested in what is being said. If you lean forward and give the speaker direct eye contact, nod at the appropriate time, and repeat back what was said to you, it shows you are strongly engaged in the conversation.



# What kind of listener are you?

## Four Tips for Listening Well

1. **Ask for Clarification:** If you are unclear about something, don't be afraid to ask questions to learn more about what the person is saying. However, don't interrupt. For example, you might ask, "Could you give me an example of what that would look like?" or "Please tell me more about that." Wait for a short pause in the conversation to ask questions.
2. **Say Back What You Hear:** Paraphrasing is a way to repeat what you have heard. It lets the speaker know you are listening and understand what was said. For example, you might repeat back, "So what I hear you saying is you need help with the housecleaning and paying the bills."
3. **Say What You Think the Other Person Is Feeling:** Try to put yourself in the speaker's shoes. Think about what the speaker may be feeling. Let this person know you are aware of those feelings. For example, you might say, "You seem very disappointed and sad that your friend is moving away. Is that true?"
4. **Interpret the Meaning:** As the speaker is talking to you, begin linking feelings with facts. Repeat those back to the speaker for clarification. Use the word "because" to link those feelings with facts. For example, you might say, "You're scared to take the new job because you've never worked in that field before, right?"



# Passive Communication

Prioritizes the needs, wants, and feelings of others, even at their own expense. Does not express their own needs, or does not stand up for them. Can lead to being taken advantage of.

- Soft spoken/quiet
- Allows others to take advantage
- Prioritizes needs of others
- Poor eye contact, looks down or away
- Does not express one's own needs or wants
- Lack of confidence



# Aggressive Communication



Expresses that only their own needs, wants, and feelings matter. The other person is bullied, and their needs are ignored.

- Easily frustrated
- Speaks in a loud or overbearing way
- Unwilling to compromise
- Use of criticism, humiliation, and domination
- Frequently interrupts or does not listen
- Disrespectful towards others



# Assertive Communication

Emphasizes the importance of both people's needs. Stands up for their own needs, wants, feelings, but also listens to and respects the needs of others.

- Listens without interruption
- Clearly states needs and wants
- Willing to compromise
- Stands up for own rights
- Confident tone and body language
- Good eye contact



# Assertiveness

To learn to be more assertive, it helps to take a look at where you are right now. Complete the following exercise honestly. This is a personal worksheet to help you understand yourself a little better.







**Your  
neighbor's  
dog barks  
at night.  
What do  
you do:**

- You resolve to say something if you ever run into him. Meanwhile, you close your bedroom window and wear earplugs to bed.
- You pound angrily on his door in the middle of the night and threaten to call the police if he doesn't shut up his dog.
- You file an anonymous complaint to the city, hoping he will get the message and consequences without knowing you instigated it.
- You catch his attention the next morning as he leaves for work. You explain to him that his dog has been barking at night and it has kept you awake.

# Why is it important to be assertive?

- While there is sometimes a time and place for all 4 communication styles, the style associated with the greatest physical and mental health — and healthiest relationships — is **assertive communication**. The last checkbox above is an example of assertive communication.
- Assertive communication means speaking up for yourself in a thoughtful, tactful way. Being assertive helps you express yourself about things that matter to you. Not doing this is one of the biggest causes of stress at work and home. Being unable to talk about your needs, concerns, and frustrations can create stress. Feeling like you can't express yourself can cause you to be less effective at coming up with joint solutions or accurately understanding the requests of others.

# Benefits of assertive communication.

- Be more comfortable with supervisors at work or with family and friends that challenge your patience.
- Find that your views and needs are more respected.
- Find that you can tolerate the feedback and views of others without feeling defeated, resentful, or defensive.
- Feel more confident about asking others for help when you need it.
- Feel more confident telling the other person about your concerns with a plan or project so there is a chance to problem-solve together.
- Feel less angry toward others (and have others less irritated with you).
- Reduce “blow ups.”
- Reduce poor sleep and energy taken by “ruminating” (thinking about something over and over).
- Find that you are more comfortable with saying no so you can more realistically say yes to the priorities (and ask what the priorities are in a situation where it feels like everything is the priority).
- Feel more comfortable getting feedback about priorities from anyone asking for your help and working together to clarify expectations so you focus your limited time and energy where it is most needed.



## “I” Statements: Key Points

- The “I” statement is a useful communication technique. It provides clear, direct messages about how you feel about a situation without placing blame or drawing a defensive or argumentative response.
- The “I” statement technique works in a caring relationship (that is, both people care about the other’s feelings, such as with family members or close friends) for:
  - Bringing up a problem in the relationship
  - Expressing appreciation for something the other has done

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## “I” Statements: Key Points continued

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- It is important to plan ahead when you want to bring up an issue. Think through your ideas. Then, set a time to talk with your friend or family member. Start with an attitude of respect and confidence shown in your tone of voice and body language.



# “I” Statements: Key Points continued

- Describe the issue in factual, neutral, unexaggerated language. Use only the present or most recent example.
  - **When:** Describe the situation—just the facts.
- Focus on your feelings rather than blaming, judging, or interpreting the other person. This fosters communication because the other person won't need to get defensive.
  - **I feel:** One-word name for feelings.
- Say what you think about the situation (your opinion, need, or interpretation). Explain how that leads to what you feel, or describe how the situation affects you (the consequences). Make sure this statement begins with “Because I.”
  - **Because I:** State your opinion or the effect of the behavior you would like to see changed.
- State a specific solution stated in a positive way.
  - **Need**
  - **Want**
  - **Wish**
  - **Would Like**
- **Invite feedback.** Ask “What do you think about this?”
  - This will help motivate the other person to make a change, and it gives an opportunity to learn about obstacles as well as to come up with a compromise when appropriate.





# Healthy Boundaries

## Session 4

### Self-Compassion and Self-Care

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# Self-Compassion and Self-Care: It All Starts With You





## What is Self-Compassion

Self-compassion involves acting with kindness, supportiveness and understanding towards yourself when you are having a difficult time, experience failing, or notice something you don't like about yourself, such as:

- Stopping to tell yourself "it's ok if I made a mistake. Everyone makes them and I can view it as a learning opportunity"
- Asking "how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?"

Self Compassion also includes setting healthy boundaries.

## Why is Self-Compassion Important?

Research consistently shows a positive correlation between self-compassion and psychological well-being. People who have self-compassion have greater:

- Social connectedness
- Emotional intelligence
- Happiness
- Overall life satisfaction.

Additionally, Self-compassion has been shown to correlate with lower anxiety, depression, shame and fear of failure.





# The three aspects of self-compassion

**Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment**

**Common Humanity vs. Isolation**

**Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification**

# Aspect 1: Self- Kindness vs. Self- Judgment

Self-Kindness: Being gentle and understanding with ourselves when we are stressed, suffering, have to set limits, fail, or feel inadequate

vs.

Self-Judgment: ignoring our pain, punishing ourselves with self criticism or having unhealthy boundaries

## Aspect 2: Common Humanity vs. Isolation

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Common Humanity:  
Recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience

vs.

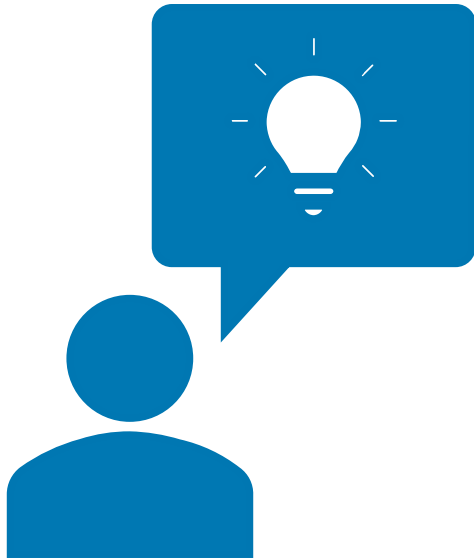
Isolation: Irrational but pervasive sense of isolation—as if “I” were the only person suffering or making mistakes





## Aspect 3: Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification

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Mindfulness: Taking a balanced approach to our negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated

vs.

Over-identification: Being “over-identified” with thoughts and feelings, so that we are caught up and swept away by negative reactivity—“Why is this happening?!!!” etc.





## Self Compassion is Not

- Self-Compassion is not self-pity.
- Self-Compassion is not self-indulgence.
- Self-Compassion is not arrogance.
- Self-Compassion is not self-esteem.

# Self-Compassion and Healthy Boundaries

It is important to set healthy boundaries about what we are willing to do, unwilling to do, willing to take on, and unwilling to take on and it is an integral part of being compassionate (Brene Brown)

Although establishing boundaries can be a challenging process, it is also empowering. Examples?

Having self-compassion makes it easy to incorporate self-care



Boundaries allow us to  
take better care of  
ourselves!



## What is Self-Care?

Self-care includes lots of aspects such as healthy eating, drinking adequate amounts of water, exercising regularly and being kind to yourself with the same love and kindness as you would give to others.

Self-care also includes setting healthy boundaries

# What Self-Care Looks Like

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Self-care is a personalized way of getting your own needs met physically, emotionally, spiritually and relationally.

It can also be defined as refueling yourself. What are some ways you provide self-care to yourself?



# Self-Care is Not



- Self-care is not over-exercising for punishment
- Self-care is not dieting or restricting food and calories
- Self-care is not speaking negative about yourself as motivation
- Self-care is not saying “yes” to everyone to be a “good person”
- Self-care is not overspending or buying quick fixes
- Self-care is not using alcohol or drugs to feel better

# Ways to implement Self-Compassion and Self-Care

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Practice mindfulness - the state of non-judgmental awareness

- being aware of our thoughts and feelings

Give our self permission to be imperfect

- allowing our self to be human, flawed or unproductive without defining ourselves as those instances and moments.



## Recap

Practicing self-compassion and self-care allows you to establish and maintain healthy boundaries.

What are some examples of self-compassion and self-care that help you establish and maintain healthy boundaries?