

# 4 Steps to Setting Boundaries

## Step 1: Set the Stage

- When possible, empathize with the person, say something positive or establish the relationship

## Step 2: Describe the behavior you wish would change

- Try to use “I” Statements. Speak in a calm, respectful tone of voice
- Your “I” statement must match the boundary you are setting. You cannot use the word “you” or the emotion “angry.”
- I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.  
(emotion) (situation)

## Step 3: Request that the behavior stop

- Be specific in your request

## Step 4: Acknowledge the Impact of the behavior

- Avoid ultimatums and empty threats

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1. “We’ve worked together for a long time and I really like this job. I feel belittled when I’m criticized in front of my coworkers. I’d appreciate it if you would speak to me in your office when discussing my performance. If I continue to be criticized in front of others, it will create a tense and stressful work environment.” OR “I will try harder to step up my performance if I’m not criticized in front of my coworkers.”
  2. “We’re both really busy and I know you’ve been distracted. I feel unappreciated when my efforts go unnoticed. Please acknowledge my time and effort when I make us dinner after work. If I continue to feel that I am not appreciated, it will create resentment and affect our relationship.” OR “When I feel appreciated, I will want to make dinner for us more often.”
  3. “I enjoy hanging out with you. It hurts my feelings when I’m left waiting. If you’re going to be more than 10 minutes late, please call or text to let me know. If you keep me waiting, it will make me want to avoid making plans with you.” OR “If you notify me when you’re going to be more than 10 minutes, I’ll continue to want to hang out with you.”