

~ Members Share ~

~~ I heard about boundaries early in my program. This was something I thought would be helpful. I decided on all sorts of boundaries for the addict in my life, and that was my first mistake. I was so busy making a list of all the things I didn't want her to do; I never considered I might be making this list out of frustration, anger, and resentment. After an incident resulting in an argument, I called my sponsor. I was shocked when she said I owed the addict an amends. I was sure I must have heard wrong. She explained that boundaries don't work when the other person involved does not know what your boundaries are. I realized I needed to figure out what was acceptable or unacceptable for me and have an honest conversation with the addict. When I clearly stated my feelings and shared my boundaries with her in a healthy way, our relationship improved.



~~ There was a time in my marriage to an addict when I lived in fear of confrontation. The addict knew this and would manipulate me. He would threaten to break valuable things in our home. When I finally took the time to discuss this fear with my sponsor, she asked why I was afraid. I replied I didn't want to lose valuable items. It dawned on me I was losing my self-worth by always caving into this manipulation, and self-worth is so much more valuable than things in my home. I decided to set a boundary. I found a good time to discuss this with my husband and explained I would no longer accept this behavior. If he threatened to break something in the future, I would leave our home immediately and stay away for as long as I felt was necessary. It wasn't easy the first few times, but he realized I was serious, and this no longer happens. Sure, a couple of things were lost, but none as valuable as my self-esteem.

MISSION STATEMENT

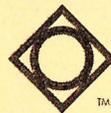
The Nar-Anon Family Groups are a worldwide fellowship for those affected by someone else's addiction. As a Twelve Step Program, we offer our help by sharing our experience, strength and hope.

VISION STATEMENT

We will carry the message of hope throughout the world to those affected by the addiction of someone near to them.

We do this by

- letting them know they are no longer alone;
- practicing the Twelve Steps of Nar-Anon;
- encouraging growth through service;
- making information available through outreach encompassing public information, hospitals, institutions, and websites; and
- changing our own attitudes.



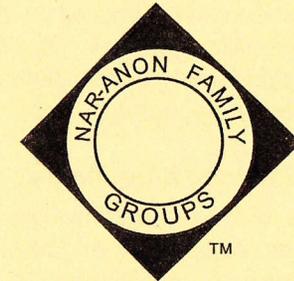
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# BOUNDARIES AND CONSEQUENCES



**By setting boundaries we become responsible for taking care of ourselves. This allows others to grow by making their own decisions and accepting the consequences.**

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*Nar-Anon is a twelve step program for families and friends of addicts.*

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# **BOUNDARIES AND CONSEQUENCES**

Soon after entering the rooms of Nar-Anon you will hear about setting boundaries.

## ***What is a boundary and what is its purpose?***

A carefully thought out boundary determines the behaviors and actions we will and will not accept. The main purpose of applying boundaries is to take care of ourselves and allow the addicts to take responsibility for their recovery. We set boundaries and clearly define them in an effort to keep our lives manageable.

## ***Benefits of setting a boundary***

Many of us discover that the gradual spiral of addiction has completely engulfed us and our lives have become unmanageable. The first step in taking back our lives, regaining our dignity, and our freedom of choice, is to set boundaries. Boundaries are a demonstration of self-love and respect. Setting a boundary for the right reason is critical to our well-being. We set them for our benefit and let go of the outcome.

## ***Is a boundary used to control others?***

An unhealthy boundary is one which intends to manipulate and control another person. In Step One, we learn we are powerless over the addict. As much as we would like to change another person, we learn in Nar-Anon that the only person we can change is ourselves. Learning the difference between helping and enabling has shown us the value of boundaries for ourselves and others. This can help us detach from the addict in a healthy way.

## ***Am I ready to set boundaries?***

If you are new to setting boundaries, you may want to start with those that are easier to

maintain. When we set boundaries, we must be willing to follow through with appropriate consequences. Boundaries and consequences go hand in hand.

Setting boundaries is an individual decision. What works for one member may not work for another. Listening to other members share can help us determine what best fits our circumstances. Some of our boundaries may change with time. Some are cast in stone and others are flexible.

Boundaries on physical, verbal, or mental abuse are not negotiable. We deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. We honor ourselves by not allowing others to mistreat us. Boundaries are helpful in all our relationships.

## ***Questions to consider when setting a boundary***

1. Am I putting the addict's needs before mine or others?
2. Is there another person involved to whom I should speak before setting a boundary with the addict?
3. Do I need to restrict my communication with the addict?
4. Do I feel more comfortable speaking to the addict on the phone rather than in person?
5. Can I afford (financially and/or emotionally) to pay for bail, a lawyer, treatment, or debts?
6. Is it sensible to share a bank account?
7. What are the consequences if I allow the addict use of my car?
8. Can I risk losing my job?
9. Am I willing to jeopardize my spiritual health by doing things I know are wrong?
10. Have I carefully considered my motives for setting this boundary?

## ***What is a consequence?***

A consequence is the result of overstepping boundaries. It should not be used as punishment or manipulation. We should be ready, willing, and able to follow through with the consequences.

## ***Setting a boundary***

It is essential we communicate our boundaries and their consequences calmly and clearly. A healthy boundary is set without anger or resentment and is always communicated to others who may be affected by our decisions. Discussing our boundaries with them may help create unity. This may make it easier to set a boundary with confidence, knowing we will not be alone if conflicts arise. If possible, communication should happen when the addict is in a receptive frame of mind and not under the influence of drugs. Honesty and the use of the "I" word is helpful. For example:

- I will not allow drugs or drug use in my home. The consequence is that I will no longer allow you to live here.
- I will not allow stealing of my property. The consequence is that I will contact the authorities.
- I will not allow myself to be verbally abused over the telephone. If this happens I will say goodbye, and hang up the phone.

## ***Am I ready to enforce my boundaries?***

Have I clearly stated the consequences for overstepping my boundary? Non-fulfillment of a stated consequence is usually viewed by the addict as a sign of weakness and a signal to continue breaking the boundary. Applying the Twelve Steps of Nar-Anon and setting boundaries is likely to result in an improvement to our lives and relationships.

**Thought for Today:** It can be very empowering to take responsibility for my own choices. I will act in my own best interest today.