# The Catholic University of America – Healthy Relationships

## Personal Boundaries

**Personal boundaries** are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

A person who always keeps others at a distance (whether emotionally, physically, or otherwise) is said to have *rigid boundaries*. Alternatively, someone who tends to get too involved with others has *porous boundaries*.

### Rigid Boundaries

* Avoids intimacy and close relationships.
* Unlikely to ask for help
* Has few close relationships
* Very protective of personal informations
* May seem detached, even with romantic partners.
* Keeps others at a distance to avoid possibility of rejection.

### Porous Boundaries

* Overshares personal information.
* Difficulty saying “no” to the requests of others.
* Overinvolved with others’ problems
* Dependent on the opinions of others
* Accepting of abuse or disrespect
* Fears rejection if they do not comply with others

### Healthy Boundaries

* Values own opinion
* Doesn’t compromise values for others.
* Shares personal information in an appropriate way (does not over or under share).
* Knows personal wants and needs, and can communicate them.
* Accepting when others say “no” to them.

Most people have a mix of different boundary types. For example, someone could have healthy boundaries at work, porous boundaries in romantic relationships, and a mix of all three types with their family. The appropriateness of boundaries depends heavily on setting. What is appropriate to say when you’re out with friends might not be appropriate when you’re at work.

Some cultures have very different expectations when it comes to boundaries. For example, in some cultures it’s considered wildly inappropriate to express emotions publicly. In other cultures, emotional expression is encouraged.

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