

# Establishing Healthy Boundaries

First, it's important to disclaim that healthy relationships have healthy boundaries.

## Types of Boundaries:

- **Mental:** thoughts, values, beliefs, opinions
  - **In the Match**, this could look like: microaggressions, microassaults, comments that marginalize, oppress, or hurt (i.e. "have you always lived in this neighborhood? Seems scary.")
    - **How to avoid crossing this boundary:** Check yourself and your implicit biases. Think before you speak. If you see or feel that you might have said something that bothered your Little or your Little said something that bothered you, set-up an open space to talk about it. Apologize and work towards moving forward. When in doubt, always contact your Match Support Specialist.
  
- **Emotional:** dismissing, rejecting, assuming, emotional dumping, inappropriate questions and/or topics.
  - **In the Match**, this could look like: inappropriate comments about personal and/or romantic relationships, cutting your Little off while they talk to you about something that is bothering them, ignoring your Little, making your Little feel unsafe or uncared for
    - **How to avoid crossing this boundary:** Your Little looks up to you and views you as a role-model. You need to keep this in mind as you choose what information you share with your Little. If you think "maybe I shouldn't," then it is a good indication that you should keep that information to yourself.
  
- **Energy/Time:** labor, time, no-shows, being late, being flakey in planning an outing
  - **In the Match**, this could look like: not showing up for scheduled match outing, not responding to text messaging within 24 hours, changing plans often or asking your Little to help clean your house, do your laundry, or other household chore
    - **How to avoid crossing this boundary:** If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by your commitments outside of the match, keep communication open. As your Little may find themselves getting an after-school job, joining a club or sports team, or finding time to hang out with friends -- schedules will change as your match progresses. The best thing you can do to keep your match healthy is to set realistic

expectations, keep communication open, and honor your commitment. Your Match Support Specialist will work with you! You just need to be honest.

- **Physical:** proximity, touch, public displays of affection, unwanted comments that are sexual or physical
  - **In the Match**, this could look like: prolonged hugging, kissing, touching of the thighs, buttocks, chest, breast, or anywhere that makes you or your Little feel uncomfortable
    - **How to avoid crossing this boundary:** keep physical touching to high-fives, fist bumps, or side hugs. Match should also maintain outings in public spaces.
  
- **Material:** possessions, gifts, giving money to your Little or their family, buying your Little or their family expensive items, groceries, or “what do I get out of this?” mentality
  - **In the Match**, this could look like: buying your Little extravagant gifts (i.e. airpods, game consoles, expensive shoes, clothing, jewelry), always spending a large sum of money on each match outing (i.e. always going to Red Lobster for meals), feeling the need to “fix” your Little and/or their family by purchasing groceries, appliances, home renovation supplies, or seasonal clothing.
    - **How to avoid crossing this boundary:** BBBSKY offers an extensive match activity list for you, found [here](#). Per policy, Bigs are to keep outings low-to-no cost. We help you do that! The relationship can quickly turn materialistic if your Little knows that they are going to get a gift when they see you. Your time and presence is a gift in itself. Also, homemade gifts are the best. Just sayin’.
      - If your Little’s family is facing financial issues, please let your Match Support Specialist know. Our team has resources available to help them.

### Tips from BBBSKY Staff:

- “If someone says something that “hurts,” do not brush it off. Open the space to create a dialogue about what happened and how to move forward.”
- “Stay open-minded when creating match activities, but respect your Little’s boundaries too. Are they afraid of water? Do not suggest an outing to the local pool or feel that you need to help them ‘break’ this fear.”
- “Match relationships sometimes take off without a hinge. Others take some time. Respect the process and where your Little is at. Or where you are at. Work with your Match Support Specialist to help.”
- “Do not feel pressured to buy your Little something ‘extra.’ Sometimes, our Littles love an opportunity to get an extra treat during outings. Setting this boundary up early prevents your match from feeling ‘material’ and allows more focus on the emotional connection.”
- “As schedules change during seasons, where your Little may have more extracurricular activities. Or, you as the Big, have a busier season at work. Talk with each other and include the Parent/Guardian about how these will affect the relationship. Discuss what schedule may work better during busy seasons.”
- “If you do not use your phone past 8pm during the work week, do not feel the need to respond to texts right away. Set expectations around when you are available to speak to your Little and/or Little’s family. But, always respond within 24 hours.”

### Articles:

[Setting Boundaries:](#) This blog part written by Lisa Bottomley with Michigan State University discusses the mentoring relationship and why it is so important to discuss boundaries with your Little. As you and your Little get to know each other more, you might wonder, “What Should I Share?” or “What Should I Keep to Myself?” This article will help you through that process.

[Tools for Mentoring Adolescents:](#) A PDF that is explicitly for mentoring teens discusses some more common topics that teenagers might want to discuss. Would you take your teenage Little to see an R-rated movie? How would you respond if your Little asks a question about their romantic partner? If you are unsure how to respond, this is a great link to view. When in doubt, though, always contact your Match Support Specialist.

[10 Tips to Mentor Youth Like a Superstar](#) Dr. Julie Connor offers an extensive 10 tip list about how to connect and mentor youth in a positive, fun, and effective way.

[Setting Boundaries in Relationships:](#) Dr. David Pruder brings his wife, Lindsay, who has first hand experience in feeling “burnt out” and learning how to set-up healthy boundaries with those we care about.

**Podcasts:**

[I Said No:](#) “I SAID NO! is a permission-giving podcast, hosted by Certified Life Coach, Stefanie, The Life Architect. #ISNPOD focuses on setting healthy boundaries by saying "NO!" to people, places and things that no longer serve us, have overstayed it's welcome, we no longer wish to tolerate or is past it's prime and season, in our lives. You know those uncomfortable conversations that most try to avoid, we'll have them here, responsibly, together. #ISNPOD will deliver Transparency. Relatability. Solutions. Truth-telling. Righteous - Ratchetness. And Fun. Press Play!”

**Ted Talks:**

[Good boundaries free you:](#) “Sarri is author of “Transform Your Boundaries,” which she based on insights gleaned from decades of experience as a marriage and family therapist. She is the founder of two organizations that support the needs of children and teens facing homelessness. In both, she created partnerships and unique programs to increase the chances of success for youth in overwhelming circumstances.”

**Books:**

[Where to Draw the Line: How to Set Healthy Boundaries Every Day:](#) “This book provides the tools and insights needed to create boundaries so that we can allow time and energy for the things that matter—and helps break down limiting defenses that stunt personal growth. Focusing on every facet of daily life—from friendships and sexual relationships to dress and appearance to money, food, and psychotherapy—Katherine presents case studies highlighting the ways in which individuals violate their own boundaries or let other people breach them. Using real-life examples, from self-sacrificing mothers to obsessive neat freaks, she offers specific advice on making choices that balance one’s own needs with the needs of others.”

[Boundary Power: How I Treat You and How I Let You Treat Me:](#) “How I treat you, how I let you treat me, and how I treat myself. You can open a whole new way of successfully dealing with life's challenges by answering the questions and acting on the information that you learn in each chapter of Boundary Power. You can take charge of your life, strengthen your character, expand your freedom, improve your marriage, and other personal relationships by learning by how to set personal boundaries in your life. The book includes: - clear definition of all boundaries as they relate to you relationally, spiritually, physically, sexually and emotionally - where you learn boundaries, the different kinds of boundaries, and the types of people with boundary problems - key questions to help you discover your own boundary problems - exercises that will help you resolve loses associated with abuses - exercises that will help you set clear healthy boundaries in all your relationships”

[Better Boundaries: Owning and Treasuring Your Life:](#) “Boundary issues contribute to a range of contemporary social problems felt by victims, abusers, overachievers, and underachievers alike. Knowing when boundaries are violated and what to do about it isn't a simple skill. It requires a surprising amount of adjustments.”