



# Healthy Relationship Skills

For Teens

# 02 Recognizing Unsafe & Safer People

## Safer Relationships

People that encourage us to be and become our best are safer to be in a relationship with. A relationally safer person is able to be connected yet gives space for both people to be themselves and knows they are responsible for their own emotional wellbeing, not the other person.

Below are traits of safer or healthier people to have a relationship with compared to those who are less safe. It's helpful to think of this as a spectrum from less safe to more safe.

Unsafe/Less Safe	Safer
1. Think or presents as having it all together	2. Admits their weaknesses
3. Is defensive	4. Are open to feedback
5. Is self-righteous	6. Are humble
7. Apologizes but keeps repeating the same mistakes	8. Apologizes and seek to change their behavior
9. Avoids working on their problems	10. Deals with their problems
11. Demands trust	12. Earns trust
13. Acts perfect	14. Admits their faults
15. Blames others	16. Takes responsibility for their actions
17. Lies	18. Tells the truth even when it hurts
19. Is stagnant	20. Grows
21. Avoids emotional closeness in relationships	22. Seeks for emotional closeness
23. Concerned mostly about the needs of self	24. Concerned also about the needs of others
25. Unsympathetic to others' pains or emotions	26. Sympathetic to others' pains or emotions
27. Can't or doesn't set or respect boundaries	28. Allows people to say "NO" and respect it
29. Confronts with guilt, shame or not at all	30. Confronts with truth in love and grace
31. Condemns	32. Forgives
33. Creates parent/child, superior or inferior relationships	34. Desires and creates equality inter relationships
35. Unstable overtime (more and more unreliable)	36. Consistent overtime (very reliable)

Unsafe/Less Safe	Safer
37. Negative influence on those in relationship	38. Positive influence on those in relationship
39. Gossips	40. Keeps others' secrets confidential
41. Envious	42. Genuine happiness for others' success
43. Relationally independent or dependent	44. Relationally interdependent
45. Entitled	46. Humble, giving and serves others
47. Self-harming or self-destructive	48. Practices healthy self-care
49. Struggles with intimacy (closeness)	50. Pursues healthy intimacy (closeness)
51. Insecure with attachment	52. Feels secure with attachment
53. Lives in Law	54. Lives in Grace
55. Seeks to control others or be controlled	56. Controls self
57. Rejects bad parts of self and good parts of others. Or focuses on good parts of self and bad parts of others.	58. Accepts self/others as whole with both good and bad parts.

*From: Safe People by Dr. Henry Cloud & John Townsend*

### Discussion Guide

Read through the traits and chat about:

- What stands out the most?
- What emotional reactions do you have when reading this?
- Do any of these traits seem similar to relationships in your life?

- What types of body sensations do you get in any of these unsafe dynamics? (Does your heart beat faster? Do you fidget more?) This is your body telling you something to listen to.
- What would you like to do different in connecting with others?
- What are warning signs you want to watch for?

## Guiding Truths

As part of preparing to find people who are safer to form healthier relationships with and to be healthier people the following principles apply:

### Having Boundaries Without Guilt

The perspectives below and recognizing truth helps us not feel as guilty. (Remember guilt does not mean we did something wrong it is a reminder to ask ourself if we are acting in line with our values).

- It's okay to have a boundary
- It's part of being a safer person.
- How other's respond to your boundaries helps you discern who are safer people.
- We can be okay if everyone doesn't like us. We are still of worth. We don't need everyone to like us.
- We can speak up with boldness. (Examples: Jesus, Mother Theresa, Gandhi, Buddha.)
- Boundaries are healthy! It is understanding of what we will allow in our lives. It is our job to hold our boundaries. Boundaries are not controlling people.

### In Relationships

1. To see red flags, we have to be willing to look at situations from different perspectives.
2. Character Discernment is a skill to be developed. It is the skill of discerning if someone is a safer or less safe person. THIS TAKES TIME and being watchful.
3. Are you the romantic, trusting, naive type, and unwilling to put people through the test of time? You are especially vulnerable to being with an unsafe person. Character comes out over time.
4. In relationships, including dating, it needs to be good, feel good and make sense in both feeling and logic.
5. **Safety breeds safety.** Safe people make us better people for being around them. Consider, does the relationship make us more critical? Aloof? When around that person do your other relationships suffer?
6. The first theme of a relationship is Connection.
7. The second theme in a relationship is separateness. It builds healthy loving relationships. "We" is still you and me, two individuals. We want to protect the separateness. Separateness is the ability to maintain emotional, physical and spiritual property lines between you and others. Separate people take ownership for what is theirs and do not take ownership for things that are not theirs. When we are separate we bring good things close and keep away those things that aren't good.
8. Love withers and dies without separateness. It is simply impossible to connect if we are not free to disagree. That type of love would be compliance and people pleasing. It is not real love. It's trying to win love. We need to be able to respectfully disagree. Test the safety of a relationship. Try it out by disagreeing respectfully and see what happens.
9. A piece of staying safe in relationships is dealing with any fears of aloneness and becoming assertive.

*From: Safe People by Dr. Henry Cloud & John Townsend*

## Boundaries are Healthy!

A boundary is a property line (think of your home's property area), recognizing where we begin and end, and where the other people begin and end.

Having a boundary is about creating safety and wellness for yourself. Your boundaries are yours.

Control is different. It is about getting others to do things they don't want (often for your gain.)

### Boundaries Include:

1. Taking **OWNERSHIP** of what is yours to own (not that of others).
2. Taking **RESPONSIBILITY** for your emotions and actions.
3. Learning and setting **LIMITS** with self.

Myth: "Boundaries are BAD because they keep people apart or make them feel bad!"

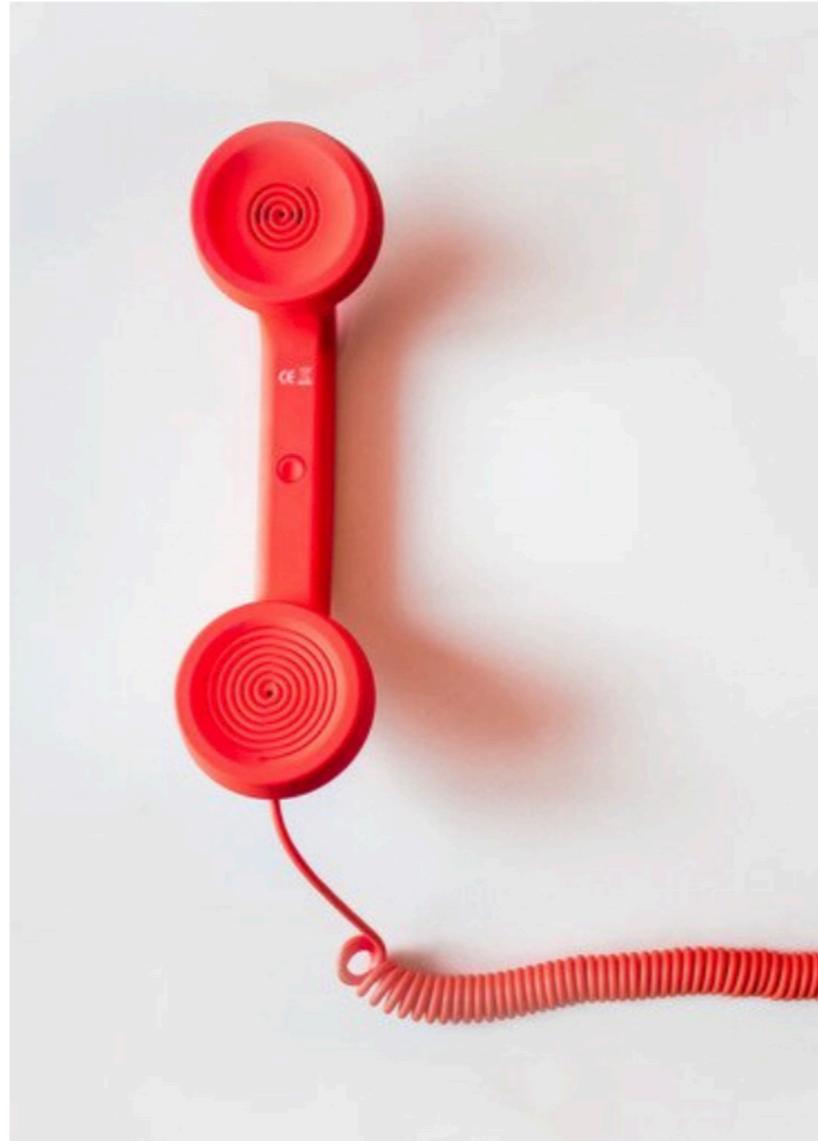
Fact: Healthy boundaries are for keeping **bad elements** (such as cruelty, abuse, harassment, and manipulation) out of your life and relationships.



## 05 How to Have Boundaries



1. Identifying what you are okay and not okay with.



2. Communicate with others what you are okay and not okay with. It is okay to make a request that they change their behavior. They also have the right to say no.



3. Identify what you will do to take care of yourself if the others are not responding as you would hope.

# 06 Communication Skill For Difficult Interactions

## DEAR MAN

### Describe

Describe the current situation (if necessary). Stick to the facts.

Tell the person exactly what you are reacting to.

“You told me you would be home by dinner but you didn’t get here until 11.”

### Express

Express your feelings and opinions about the situation. Don’t assume that the other person knows how you feel.

“When you come home so late, I start worrying about you.”

Use phrases such as “*I want*” instead of “*You should,*” “*I don’t want*” or “*You shouldn’t.*”

### Assert

Assert yourself by asking for what you want or saying no clearly. Do not assume that others will figure out what you want.

Remember that others cannot read your mind.

“I would really like it if you would call me when you are going to be late.”

### Reinforce

Reinforce (reward) the person ahead of time (so to speak)

by explaining positive effects of getting what you want or need.

If necessary, also clarify the negative consequences of not getting what you want or need.

“*I would be so relieved, and a lot easier to live with, if you do that.*”

Remember also to reward desired behavior after the fact.

### (Stay) Mindful

Keep your focus ON YOUR GOALS.

Maintain your position. Don’t be distracted. Don’t get off the topic.

“**Broken record**” - Keep asking, saying no, or expressing your opinion over and over and over. Just keep replaying the same thing again and again.

**Ignore attacks** - If another person attacks, threatens, or tries to change the subject, ignore the threats, comments, or attempts to divert you.

Do not respond to attacks. Ignore distractions.

Just keep making your point.

“I would still like a call.”

### Appear Confident

Appear EFFECTIVE and competent.

Use a confident voice tone and physical manner; make good eye contact.

No stammering, whispering, staring at the floor, retreating. No saying, “I’m not sure,” etc.

### Negotiate

Be willing to GIVE TO GET.

Offer and ask for other solutions to the problem.

Reduce your request.

Say no, but offer to do something else or to solve the problem another way. Focus on what will work.

“How about if you text me when you think you might be late?”

Turn the tables - Turn the problem over to the other person. Ask for other solutions.

“What do you think we should do? . . . I can’t just stop worrying about you [or I’m not willing to].”

## Apply DEAR MAN Skills ....

It is to help turn around really difficult situations, focus the skills on the other person's behavior right now.

Use When other people have really good skills themselves, and keep refusing your legitimate requests or pestering you to do something you don't want to do.

1. **Describe the current interaction.** If the "broken record" and ignoring don't work, make a statement about what is happening between you and the person now, *but without implying motives.*

*Example:* "You keep asking me over and over, even though I have already said no several times," or "It is hard to keep asking you to empty the dishwasher when it is your month to do it."

*Not:* "You obviously don't want to hear what I am saying," "You obviously don't care about me," "Well, it's obvious that what I have to say doesn't matter to you," "Obviously you think I'm stupid."

2. **Express feelings or opinions about the interaction.** For instance, in the middle of an interaction that is not going well, you can express your feelings of discomfort in the situation.

*Example:* "I am sorry I cannot do what you want, but I'm finding it hard to keep discussing it," or "It's becoming very uncomfortable for me to keep talking about this, since I can't help it. I am starting to feel angry about it," or "I'm not sure you think this is important for you to do."

*Not:* "I hate you!", "Every time we talk about this, you get defensive," "Stop patronizing me!"

3. **Assert wishes in the situation.** When another person is pestering you, you can ask him or her to stop it. When a person is refusing a request, you can suggest that you put the conversation off until another time. Give the other person a chance to think about it.

*Example:* "Please don't ask me again. My answer won't change," or "OK, let's stop discussing this now and pick it up again sometime tomorrow," or "Let's cool down for a while and then get together to figure out a solution."

*Not:* "Would you shut up?" "You should do this!", "You should really calm down and do what's right here."

4. **Reinforce.** When you are saying no to someone who keeps asking, or when someone won't take your opinion seriously, suggest ending the conversation, since you aren't going to change your mind anyway. When trying to get someone to do something for you, you can suggest that you will come up with a better offer later.

*Example:* "Let's stop talking about this now. I'm not going to change my mind, and I think this is just going to get frustrating for both of us," or "OK, I can see you don't want to do this, so let's see if we can come up with something that will make you more willing to do it."

*Not:* "If you don't do this for me, I'll never do anything for you ever again," "If you keep asking me, I'll get a restraining order against you," "Gosh, you must be a terrible person for not doing this/for asking me to do this."