

Setting Boundaries with your Family over the Holidays



The holiday season can be a time filled with joy and ease for some and stress and tension for others. Often, this is largely determined by the relationship you have with the people you spend the holidays with.

This article outlines tips for setting boundaries with your family members to keep your holiday gatherings running smoothly and everyone's stress levels at bay.

Why boundaries are important

Relational boundaries are guidelines you set to protect your well-being. Effective boundaries are a form of self-care and self-love that help you create strong and healthy relationships with the important people in your life.

When you clearly communicate your boundaries and the consequences of breaking them to your friends and family members, they understand your expectations. This can lead to fewer arguments, letdowns, and stressful situations with them.



3 Tips for setting boundaries during the holidays

At first, setting boundaries can be daunting. If you're feeling this way, remember these tips to help make the holiday season a more positive experience for everyone.

1. Put Your Needs First

Considering your personal needs and putting them first is key to setting healthy boundaries with family members.

Take time to reflect on what caused issues in your relationships at your last family gathering. Was it Uncle Sam pressuring you to chat about politics when you know that never ends well, or the fact that you felt like you couldn't take time for yourself when you needed it? Decide to set clear boundaries around these issues with the people they apply to before or at the start of your next holiday gathering.

Considering your needs and putting them above the needs and wants of others is a great way to get started with setting boundaries with family members.

2. Take a Direct Approach

The best approach to setting boundaries is to be kind but direct. Sometimes your tone can make all the difference when it comes to confronting someone, so focus on being understanding and caring. While doing so, don't forget that your boundaries matter and to be direct with the person you're speaking with, no beating around the bush.

If you're anxious to have a confrontation with a family member, practice what you want to say beforehand. Even if your nerves get to you and you don't say exactly what you practiced, practicing is still likely to have helped your confidence and conviction.



3. Learn to Say “No”

Saying “no” is so important when establishing healthy boundaries. Learning to say no will save you feelings of resentment, and added stress and will help you set expectations for your family members during the holidays.

If you're naturally inclined to people-pleasing, it's probably not uncommon for you to feel overwhelmed and maybe even used, during the holidays. This tendency can make setting boundaries feel quite uncomfortable. Don't worry, like anything else, the more often you do it the more comfortable you'll feel.

Instead of saying yes when you want to say no at your next family gathering, practice your empowered "no", and expect your family members to respect your decisions. If they don't, it might be time to reconsider your relationship.