

DBT-Informed Boundary Building Worksheet

Define, communicate and maintain realistic boundaries

What a boundary is

A boundary communicates what you will participate in and what action you will take to protect your wellbeing, time, privacy, values or safety. A boundary is not a method for controlling another person. Effective boundaries are specific, realistic and followed by actions you can carry out.

1. Identify the boundary

What behaviour, request or pattern is affecting me? Describe observable facts.

What need, value, responsibility or safety concern does this boundary protect?

2. Choose the boundary type

Area	Examples to consider
Time and availability	Response times, work hours, visits, interruptions.
Physical and sexual	Touch, personal space, consent, medical autonomy.
Emotional	Topics, insults, emotional labour, privacy, crisis capacity.
Digital and information	Passwords, photos, messages, location and confidentiality.
Material and financial	Loans, possessions, spending and shared responsibilities.

3. Write a clear boundary statement

Simple structure

When [observable behaviour happens], I will [action I control]. You may add a brief request or reason, but avoid long arguments. Example structure: "Please do not raise your voice at me. If shouting continues, I will end the conversation and return later."

My boundary statement:

My brief repeat phrase if pressured or debated:

The action I can realistically follow through on:

4. Plan for responses

Possible response	My effective reply or action
Agreement or cooperation	
Questions or negotiation	
Guilt, ridicule or repeated pressure	
Escalation, threats or unsafe behaviour	

Safety planning

When a person is coercive, violent, stalking you or controlling access to money, transport, healthcare or communication, directly announcing a boundary can sometimes increase danger. Consider confidential specialist support and a personalised safety plan.

5. Review and follow-through

Review question	Notes
Was the boundary clear, respectful and enforceable? What support or adjustment is needed?	

What will help me follow through consistently without escalating the situation?

Who can support me? Include trusted people, professional support or practical resources.

Boundary practice log

Date / situation	Boundary used	Response and follow-through	What I learned

Use this worksheet safely

This worksheet is for education and skills practice. It does not replace assessment, diagnosis, crisis support, legal advice or individual treatment. In situations involving threats, coercive control, stalking or violence, prioritise safety and seek specialist help rather than relying only on communication skills.

Research basis: DBT interpersonal effectiveness includes asking for needs, saying no, maintaining relationships and protecting self-respect. Boundary building here is a supplementary DBT-consistent application of those principles. Sources consulted: Berkshire Healthcare NHS DBT overview; NHS interpersonal-effectiveness resources; peer-reviewed DBT skills-training literature.