



How can I set relationship boundaries with the people I work with?

Establishing boundaries in the workplace can be a challenge as sometimes the borders won't be obvious until they're crossed.

Nevertheless, boundaries are important to building and maintaining effective workplace relationships.

WITHOUT BORDERS

Managers need to be aware that a number of issues can arise if workplace rules are weak (or non-existent), or if the boundaries of others are violated. These can include:

- conflict and tension
- poor productivity
- low morale
- over-worked employees
- disrespectful staff
- sexual harassment
- bullying and harassment
- violence
- legal issues.

TYPES OF BOUNDARIES

It's important to have your own boundaries in the workplace and to recognise those of others. Broadly speaking, they can be broken down into three categories:

- **Job responsibilities:** These boundaries cover individual job responsibilities.
- **Interpersonal:** These cover our interactions with others in the workplace.
- **Personal:** These are our individual boundaries.



Maintain boundaries by being upfront when people are asking too much.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers and employees should set professional boundaries around:

- who sets assignments
- who people report to
- who gives feedback
- who sets the priorities.

Maintain boundaries by being upfront when people are asking too much. For example, if a co-worker says, "I'll call you later tonight to discuss this project", you can simply say, "I'd prefer if you called me before 6pm".

Another way of keeping your boundaries while remaining a team player is to say, "I can't help at the moment as I'm working on another project, but I'm happy to help once I have finished this".

When you're nearing your workload limit, seek help from your manager and be prepared to offer some solutions.

INTERPERSONAL

Interpersonal boundaries should include:

- the tone you use with others and how they speak to you
- the attitude and approach of co-workers
- how you and others work together on projects, even if you're in conflict
- what is appropriate in work conversations and emails.

It's important to let others know immediately when your boundaries have been crossed. For example, if a co-worker begins to gossip about someone else, clearly and politely tell them, "I would prefer not to get involved".

Also recognise that some behaviour you regard as acceptable may cross others' boundaries. This is particularly true of some conservative and religious cultures.

PERSONAL

Establish a boundary between family time and work by putting your work mobile and laptop away at home.

Announce your holiday plans well in advance so people know you will be unavailable during this time.

Be flexible. If you're willing to work late to meet deadlines, your manager may be more receptive to letting you leave early for an occasional family function.

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The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

Website: cmhaa.org.au

LinkedIn: [Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/corporate-mental-health-alliance-australia)



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