

# 3 ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP BOUNDARIES

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Picture this: a precious jewel sparkles under a glass case atop a pedestal. Surrounding the treasure are some questionable characters who want to break into the case so they can have that jewel for themselves. Now imagine your relationship is that jewel, and those characters are all of the external factors that, while not necessarily sinister in nature, have the potential to disrupt or damage the equilibrium of your relationship. This might seem like a dramatic comparison, but the idea is the same. We need to be protective of our relationship by creating boundaries in these areas:

## 1. Time

Work, kids, chores, friends/family, hobbies, screens – there are endless things that vie for our time. Are you prioritizing your relationship? Unfortunately, there are only 24 hours in a day and only a portion of those in which we really have a choice in how we spend them. You can see how your time can easily be taken up by things other than your relationship. At times, there's not a lot we can do about it. There are seasons of life that are simply busier than others. But by setting boundaries around how much time you spend on things outside your relationship, you can prevent an imbalance – helping you stay connected instead of drifting apart.

## 2. Privacy

Do you tell your friends about your last **big fight** or vent to coworkers about your partner's most annoying habits? Do you share the details of intimate conversations with your family? It's important for you and your spouse to have agreed-upon boundaries for what is okay to share with others, and what should stay private. At the very least, remain **respectful** of each other and your relationship as a priority when sharing with others, and if you're ever not sure what to share, check with your partner first.

## 3. Energy

Like time, we only have so much energy; unlike time, however, it's much easier to expend more than we have, leaving us feeling burnt out – physically, mentally, or emotionally. Setting boundaries that help you limit your energy spent on external things can help you ensure you have enough left to give to your spouse, relationship, & family. This might mean skipping a solo workout because you have a “run date” with your partner later in the day. It could be giving yourself time to decompress after a long day of work so you can be mentally present at home. Or it could come in the form of limiting the amount of emotional support you give to a chronically upset friend. It's not to say that these other things aren't important, but setting boundaries helps you be aware of letting things get too out of balance.

*Boundaries are not always absolute*; there will be times when they're broken or become a bit fuzzy – and you might feel the strain in your relationship. Going through this is normal. That's why it's so important to set them from the start: they give you a “home base” to return to when things get a little out of whack. Being intentional about setting boundaries helps you maintain and protect the precious thing that is your relationship.