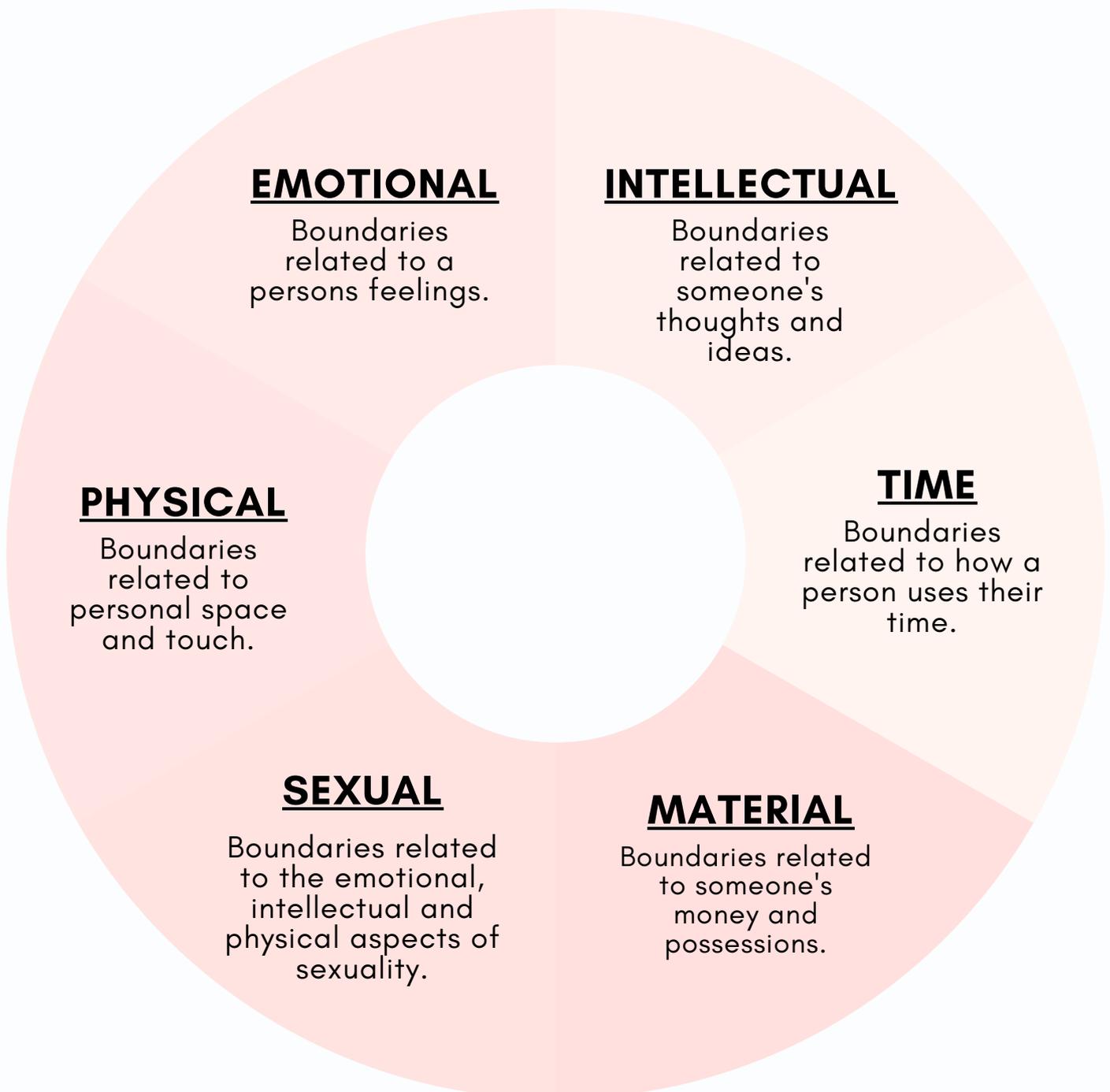


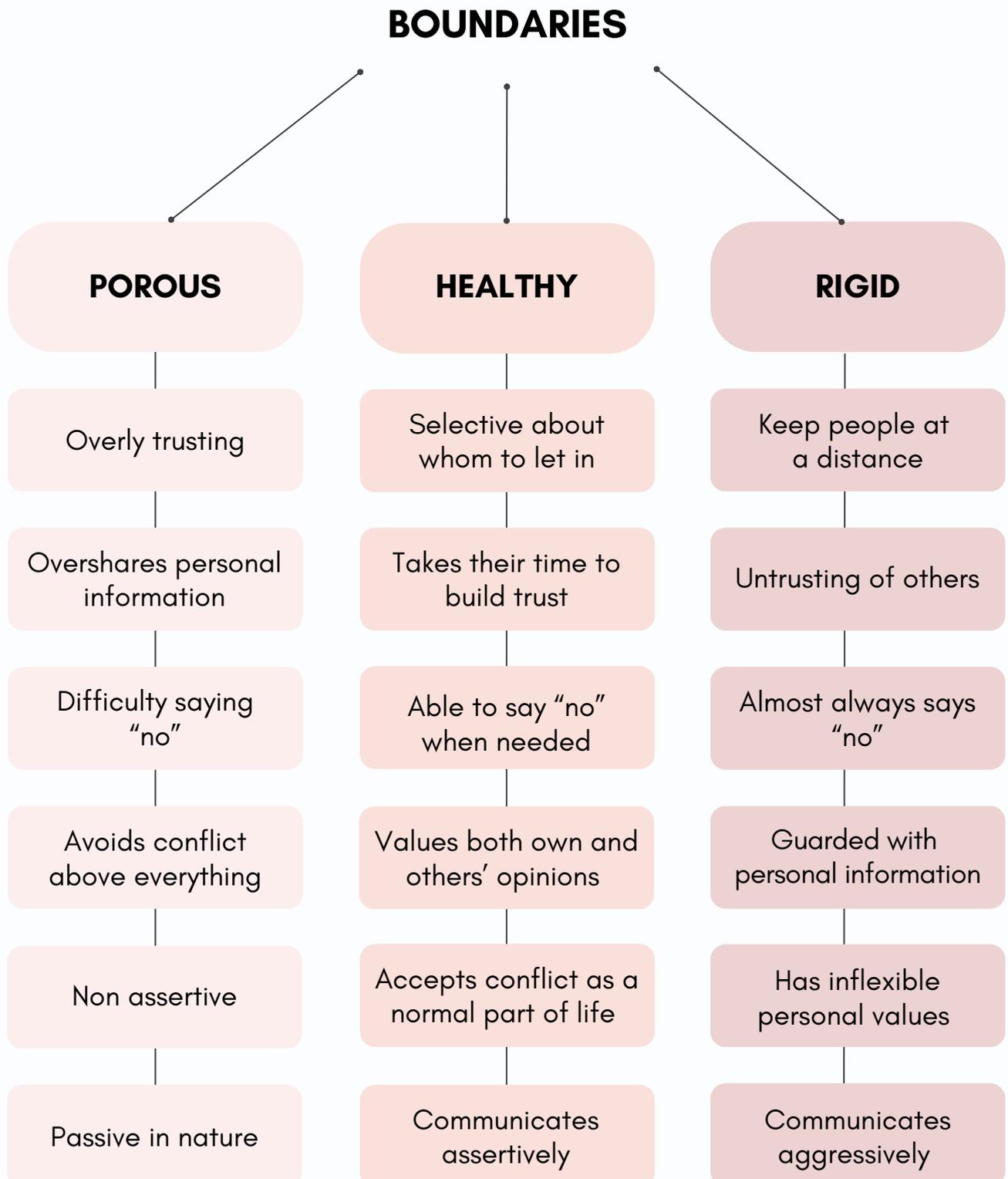
# TYPES OF BOUNDARIES

There are many different types of boundaries we can set. Often we think of boundaries related to emotional and physical needs only, however it is important to consider boundaries more widely to build healthy relationships. Read on below for different types of boundaries.



# BOUNDARY STYLES

Boundaries define what is acceptable to us, and what is not in a relationship. There are however three different boundary styles that are commonly adopted. Read on below for the differences between the different styles of boundaries.



# BOUNDARIES DO'S & DON'TS

 DO

Say no when  
needed

Communicate  
assertively

Take your time to  
build trust

Stand by your  
personal values

Value your own and  
others opinion

 DON'T

Automatically adopt  
others opinions

Avoid conflict by  
giving in

Communicate  
aggressively

Overshare personal  
information

Push others away

# SETTING BOUNDARIES

## WHAT TO SAY

"I'm not comfortable with this"

"I'm drawing the line at..."

"I can't do that for you"

"I've decided not to"

"This doesn't work for me"

"Not at this time"

"I don't have the capacity right now"

"I've decided not to"

"I need to ask that you don't do that"

"I disagree with that approach"

"That has not been my experience"

"I'm not comfortable with..."

"This is not acceptable"

"Please don't do that"

## WHAT TO DO

### **USE CONFIDENT BODY LANGUAGE**

Face the person you are speaking to, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume.

### **PLAN AHEAD**

Think about what you want to say, and how you will say it, before entering a difficult discussion.

### **BE RESPECTFUL**

Avoid yelling, do not attack, or give the silent treatment. It's okay to be firm and concise, but make sure to also listen actively.

### **COMPROMISE**

When appropriate, listen to and consider the needs of the other person. You don't have to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.

# TIPS FOR SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

## **KNOW YOUR LIMITS**

Before you are able to set boundaries you need to consider what is acceptable to you and what isn't. Knowing your limits is an important starting point for setting healthy boundaries.

## **KNOW YOUR VALUES**

Equally as important as knowing your limits, is knowing your values. What do you value highest in your life? Family, health, success, connection, space, learning? Only you know the answer to this.

## **LISTEN TO YOUR EMOTIONS**

If you notice feelings of discomfort or resentment, don't push them down. Try to listen to and understand what your feelings are telling you before responding to the situation.

## **RESPECT YOURSELF**

Boundaries that are too open or porous may be a sign that you do not value and respect yourself enough in the relationship. It is important to respect yourself first.

## **HAVE RESPECT FOR OTHERS**

Be sure that your actions are not at the expense of others. Interactions should not be about "winning", or taking as much as possible from the other person. Instead, consider what's fair to everyone.

## **BE ASSERTIVE**

Being firm and saying no when you feel like your boundaries are being crossed is key. You can be attentive and willing to compromise, but it is important to remember that you can say no when you need to.

# SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES IN RELATIONSHIPS

1

Define your non negotiable limits. What are you comfortable with, what are you willing to compromise on, and what is a deal breaker?

2

Communicate your boundaries. We can't expect someone else to "just know". Communicating your boundaries sets healthy expectations.

3

Don't be afraid to say "no" if your partner asks you to do something that makes you uncomfortable.

4

Be assertive. If you've set your boundaries and your partner does not respect them, it is perfectly okay to reinforce them assertively.

5

Know your values and needs. When you do, you can be much more sure in what boundaries to set in your relationship.

# BOUNDARIES REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**In some relationships, healthy boundaries appear to form naturally and with ease. In other relationships, setting healthy boundaries can be difficult. What challenges have you faced when trying to set healthy boundaries?**

**Values are the things that are most important to you. Ideally, your boundaries will reflect your values. For example, if you value time with your family, you might want to set strict boundaries around work hours and commitments. What are your most important values, and how do your boundaries reflect these values?**

**In your opinion, what are the signs of a healthy relationship? What sort of boundaries might you see in a healthy relationship?**

**People who are influential in your life often act as models for boundary-setting (whether their boundaries are healthy or unhealthy). Think about someone who has helped shape you. What has this person taught you about boundaries, whether intentionally or unintentionally?**

**When someone has rigid boundaries, they may be reluctant to ask for help from others. They may also be very protective of personal information, and avoidant of close relationships. What could the pros and cons of rigid boundaries be? Think about an area of life where you've had rigid boundaries. Did this serve you and your relationships?**

**When someone has porous boundaries, they may overshare personal information, have difficulty saying "no," and can be overly concerned with the opinions of others. What could the pros and cons of porous boundaries be? Think about an area of life where you've had porous boundaries. Did this serve you and your relationships?**

# EXPLORING YOUR BOUNDARIES

Take a moment to reflect on how your boundaries are in the different boundary domains with people around you. You can think about a specific person you want to explore your boundaries with, or you can reflect on your boundaries in general with family, friends, a partner, colleagues etc. Tick the boxes below for each relevant response to the different boundary types, and then answer the questions below.

TYPE OF BOUNDARY	POROUS	RIGID	HEALTHY	OTHER
PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES				
EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES				
INTELLECTUAL BOUNDARIES				
SEXUAL BOUNDARIES				
MATERIAL BOUNDARIES				
TIME BOUNDARIES				

What are some specific actions you can take to improve your boundaries?

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How might other people respond to your improved boundaries?

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How will your life be different when you have healthy boundaries in place?

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# INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Myths or mistaken beliefs about interpersonal effectiveness often get in the way of our ability to build healthy relationships. Take a moment to read through some common myths about interpersonal effectiveness below and practice challenging the myths by rethinking how you look at relationships.

1. I don't deserve to get what I want or need.

Challenge: *For example, "my wants and needs are important and need to be considered"*

2. Making a request for something will make me look weak.

Challenge: *For example, "being able to communicate my feelings and needs to others can show great strength"*

3. I have to be sure of the other person's answer before I ask for something.

Challenge:

4. If they say no, I won't be able to manage it.

Challenge:

5. Asking for things for myself is selfish.

Challenge:

6. I have to sacrifice my own needs for others' happiness.

Challenge:

7. Communicating my needs is only okay if I can do the other person a favour.

Challenge:

8. I shouldn't have to ask. The other person should just know what I need.

Challenge:

9. Other people have to approve of me.

Challenge:

10. Why should I make an effort if they are not willing to.

Challenge:

11. Others don't deserve respect unless they show me respect first.

Challenge:

12. My partner/friends/family should be willing to drop everything to help me.

Challenge:

13. Showing that I am upset will make the other person think I'm dramatic.

Challenge:

14. Saying no to their request is selfish of me.

Challenge:

15. Their needs come first.

Challenge:

16. The problem is just in my head.

Challenge:

17. I'm a burden to others when I speak up for myself or state my needs.

Challenge:

18. If I say what I think people will push me away.

Challenge:

19. There is no point in trying to build relationships. Everyone leaves me eventually anyway.

Challenge:

20. Getting what I want, when I want it, is the most important thing.

Challenge:

# RELATIONSHIP GREEN FLAGS

We often hear about the need to look out for “red flags”, however ever more important is knowing what a healthy relationship looks like. Read on for some key “green flags” below.



## **RESPECT**

You respect and value your partner, and express gratitude often.



## **COMMONALITY**

You share important goals, beliefs, and values with your partner.



## **COMMITMENT**

You are invested in your partner and the relationship.



## **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

You communicate your own needs, while also respecting your partners.



## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

You take responsibility for your actions, and work as a team.



## **INTIMACY**

You feel close and connected with your partner.



## **EMPATHY**

You see your partner’s perspective and understand their feelings.



## **HONESTY**

Your actions align with your words, commitments, and values.



## **INDEPENDENCE**

You have your own separate interests and goals.



## **CONFIDENCE**

You feel comfortable being yourself in the relationship



## **SAFETY**

You respect your partner’s boundaries and feel safe physically, intellectually and emotionally.



## **BALANCE**

You find happiness in time spent together and apart. Some needs are also met outside the relationship through friendships, hobbies, etc.

# MY RELATIONSHIP VALUES

Imagine that it's ten years from now, and you and your partner have gathered together your closest friends and relatives to celebrate the last ten years of your relationship. Take a moment to imagine the space you are in, who is there, and the feeling of the event.

Now, imagine that your partner stands up to make a speech about the last ten years of your life together. About what you stand for, what you mean to them, and the role that you have played in their life. Imagine your partner saying whatever it is, deep in your heart, you would most like to hear. Imagine them describing your character, your strengths, and the ways in which you have contributed to the relationship.

Close your eyes now and take a couple of minutes to imagine this as vividly as possible, then write answers to the questions below.

## QUALITIES

What sort of personal qualities do you want to bring into your relationship?

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## STRENGTHS

What character strengths do you wish to employ or develop?

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**BEHAVIOR**

How do you want to behave or act in your relationship?

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**PRINCIPLES**

What do you want to stand for as a partner?

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**WORDS FROM YOUR PARTNER**

If we asked your partner to describe the ten things they most appreciate about your character or personality. In an ideal world, what would you most love your partner to say?

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# VALUES GAP IN RELATIONSHIPS

Imagine that you woke up tomorrow and a miracle had happened and your partner suddenly turned into your perfect “soul mate” with no faults at all, no annoying habits, always there for you, able to meet your every need, want, and desire.

If that happened, then how would you change?

Please take your time to seriously consider this and write your answers below.

**WHAT WOULD YOU STOP, START, DO MORE OF AND LESS OF?**

**WHAT SORT OF PARTNER WOULD YOU TRY TO BECOME?**

**WHAT ATTITUDE WOULD YOU CULTIVATE TOWARDS YOUR PARTNER?**

**HOW WOULD YOU SPEAK TO YOUR PARTNER WHEN YOU WANTED SOMETHING?**

**HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO YOUR PARTNER WHEN THEY WERE IN PAIN?**

**HOW WOULD YOU TREAT YOUR PARTNER WHEN THEY MADE A MISTAKE OR SCREWED UP?**

**IS THERE A GAP BETWEEN THE WAY YOU'D IDEALLY LIKE TO BEHAVE AS A PARTNER AND THE WAY THAT YOU ACTUALLY ARE BEHAVING NOW? WHAT IS STOPPING YOU FROM LIVING BY YOUR VALUES RIGHT NOW?**

# IDENTIFYING CONTROLLING ACTIONS

It is easy to fall in to the trap of seeing your partner as a project and to see it as your role to “change” them. This can however lead to much more hurt, frustration and disconnect then it tends to lead to positive experiences and connection. Spend some time reflecting on everything you have ever tried doing to control your partner, and then assess how effective it was in the short term and what it cost you in the long term.

<b>What does my partner say or do that I don't like?</b>	<b>What I have said or done to stop or change my partner's behavior?</b>	<b>Did my actions change my partner's behavior in the long term?</b>	<b>Did my actions enhance and enrich our relationship in the long term? If not, what has this cost me/us?</b>

# REACTING VS RESPONDING

Reacting and responding can on the surface level appear to be the same thing, however the underlying functions and actions between reacting and responding are very different, and often lead to widely different outcomes.

## REACTING

Instant and emotion driven

Based on prejudices, stereotypes and personal past experiences

Done without thinking of the consequences

May have a positive or negative impact based on the situation

Impulsive and aggressive in nature

Leads to poor communication

## RESPONDING

Has to be learnt and purposefully practised

Requires self-awareness, self-regulation, mindfulness and empathy

Falls in line with the core values of the individual

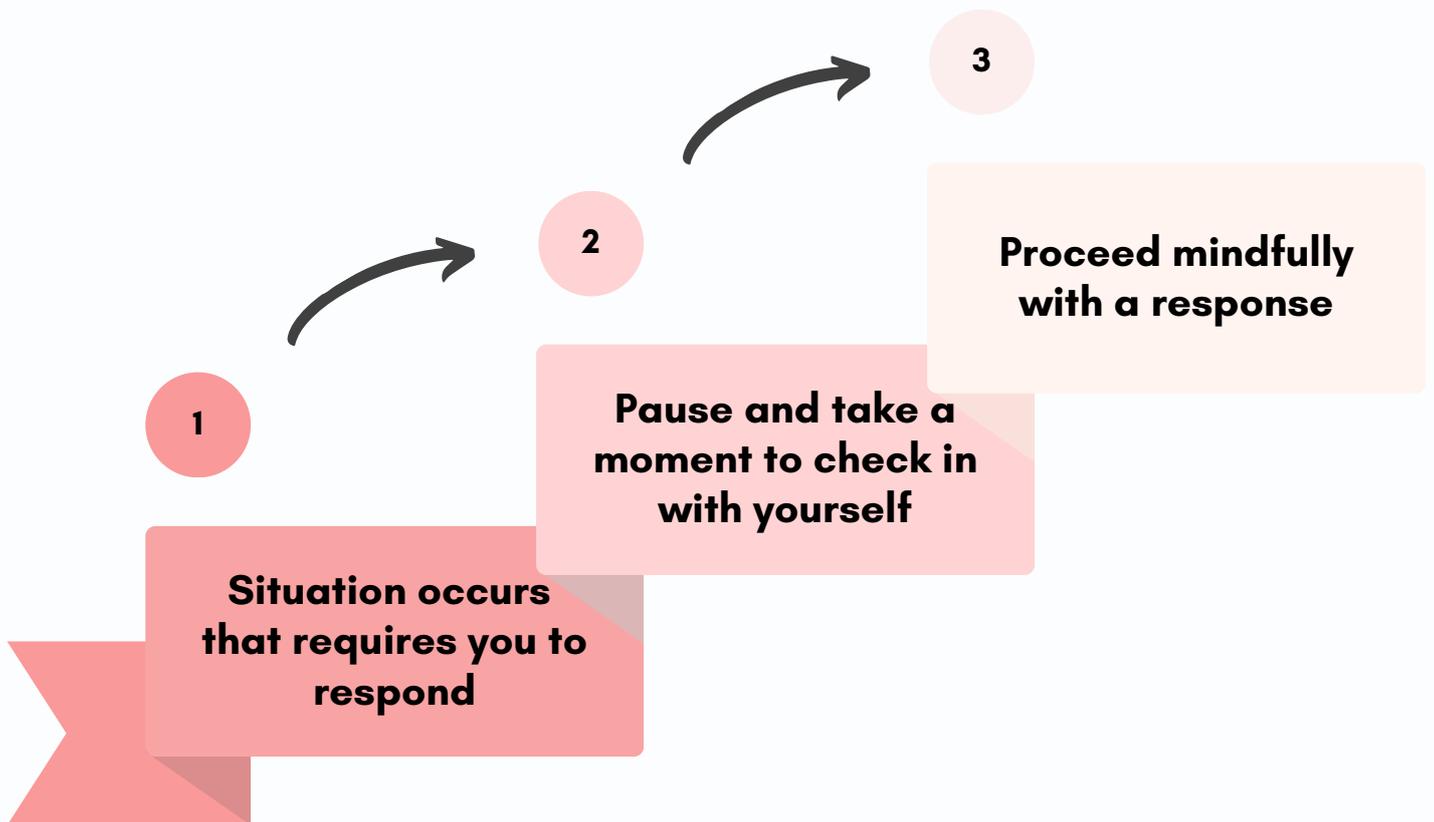
Weighs the pros and cons of the affect on the other person/persons

Has a positive impact

Calm and well thought through in nature

# RESPONDING

Learning to respond rather than simply react is a valuable skill that will help you build more flexible and positive communication, while regulating and validating your emotions.



1

When a situation occurs, take a moment to think about if this situation requires an immediate response or action. If you need to, take a moment to step back and give yourself space.

2

Before responding stop what you are doing, take a second to identify what is happening internally and around you, validate your thoughts and feelings, check the facts of the situation (e.g. Is the situation what you think? Maybe you are catastrophizing? Or over-emphasizing the negative?). Finally, consider your options and what will be the most helpful approach in this situation.

3

Proceed mindfully with a response that reflects your values, while taking in to consideration yours and the other person/persons feelings and needs.

# VALIDATION

## VALIDATION MEANS...

...finding the truth in a persons perspective or experience, and verifying the facts of that situation, while also acknowledging the persons thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

To validate we do not need to agree with the person, nor do we need to validate things that are invalid. However, by validating we can make the other person feel seen and heard.

## WHY VALIDATE?

- It improves our relationship with others by showing that we are listening to and understanding them.
- It improves interpersonal effectiveness by reducing pressure to prove who is right, negative reactions, and anger.
- It makes problem solving, closeness and support possible.
- Invalidation is hurtful and harmful to our relationships.

## IMPORTANT THINGS TO VALIDATE

- The facts of a situation.
- The experiences, thoughts, feelings, beliefs and opinions of the other person.
- Suffering and difficulties encountered by the other person.

## REMEMBER...

- Validating does not necessarily mean you agree.
- Validating does not mean you like it.
- Only validate the valid.

## HOW TO VALIDATE

- ✓ Pay attention to what the other person is saying.
- ✓ Reflect back and paraphrase what they have just told you.
- ✓ Pay attention to the other persons body language and facial expressions.
- ✓ Show equality. Be yourself and be willing to admit faults and mistakes.
- ✓ Admit to the valid. If they ask you for something reasonable, accept this.
- ✓ Show care and compassion.
- ✓ Show understanding by using phrases such as "It makes sense that you . . . because . . ."

Don't forget to also practice validating yourself. Validation is not just for other people. It is equally important to validate and acknowledge your own experiences, thoughts, feelings, beliefs and opinions.