



## Healthy Boundary Styles

Below describes three limited boundary styles and 21 questions to explore if one of these boundary styles is getting in the way of a healthy relationship.

### Under-bounded Style

In an under-bounded style, you have the propensity to give too much away for a given circumstance. A person with an under-bounded style is missing a clearly defined sense of self and is likely to be enmeshed with their partner. If you have an under-bounded style, you have trouble saying, “no” and setting healthy limits.

**If you answer “yes” to one or more of these, it is possible that you have an under-bounded style:**

1. Do you have a pattern of having consensual sex before you are ready in your relationships?
2. Do you say “yes” when you want to say “no?”
3. Do you have a pattern of sharing your things (ie, money, car, home) early in the relationship before trust is established?
4. Do you feel “taken advantage of” often?
5. Do you often worry that your partner will leave you?
6. Do you share too much personal information before trust is established?
7. Do you “move too fast” in relationships?
8. Do you feel powerless in your relationship?
9. Do you feel responsible for your partner’s well-being?
10. Do you feel controlled or manipulated in your relationship?

### Over-bounded Style

For folks that have an over-bounded style, people will experience you as “walled off” or guarded. In this case there is a perpetual “no” happening. You have a hard time saying, “yes.” There is an avoidance of physical or emotional contact and there is a tendency to be self-reliant and avoid being vulnerable.

**If you answer “yes” to one or more of these questions, it is possible you have an over-bounded style:**

1. Do you prefer a lot of distance in your relationship?
2. Do you view relationships or your partner as threatening (when there is no real threat of danger)?
3. Do you have a hard time saying “yes?”
4. Do people experience you as guarded?
5. Does emotional closeness make you feel uncomfortable?
6. Does physical closeness make you feel uncomfortable?
7. Do you feel isolated in your relationship?
8. Are you rigid or have a lot of rules in your relationship?
9. Do you have difficulty accepting help?
10. Is it difficult trust in relationships?

### **Pendulum Boundary Style**

In this case, you can switch back and forth. You might start out with an under-bounded style and when that creates a painful experience, swing to the other side of being over-bounded. For example, you might long for emotional closeness and once you have it, feel vulnerable and uncomfortable, so you slam shut like a scared clam.

**Did you answer “yes” to multiple questions in both categories Under-bounded and Over-bounded?** If so, it is possible that you have pendulum boundary style.

If you uncovered a limited boundary style, It’s important to remember that your way of relating in your relationship was created out of necessity from your childhood experiences. At some point, it served as a way of keeping you safe and connected to your parents or primary caregivers. I encourage you to ask yourself this question: How did my boundary style help me when I was a kid? The answer to this question will give you some insight into why you are either under-bounded or over-bounded.

By simply bringing awareness to your boundary style, you can begin to reorganize the way you show up in your relationship. If you notice an under-bounded style, start challenging your automatic “yes.” If the opposite is true and you are more over-bounded, begin to question your automatic, “no.” Sometimes, awareness is enough to bring about the change you desire. And sometimes awareness is not enough; you may need the support of a relationship counselor. If that is you, I encourage to get the help you need from a trained relationship therapist.

*Source: <https://www.mindfullivingcounselingservices.com>*