



Massachusetts Association for the  
Blind and Visually Impaired

# SUCCESSFUL BOUNDARY SETTING

*\*Click the arrow on tool bar or scroll down to view all slides. After you complete the unit, there will be a "completed and continue" button prompting you to move on.\**

# TRAINING OVERVIEW

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What are personal boundaries?  
Why is it important to set boundaries?  
Benefits of setting healthy boundaries  
Characteristics of unhealthy boundaries  
Boundary encroaching can happen both ways  
Mindful volunteering  
Setting boundaries from the beginning  
Take it slow  
Scenarios  
Tips for setting healthy boundaries  
We are here to help



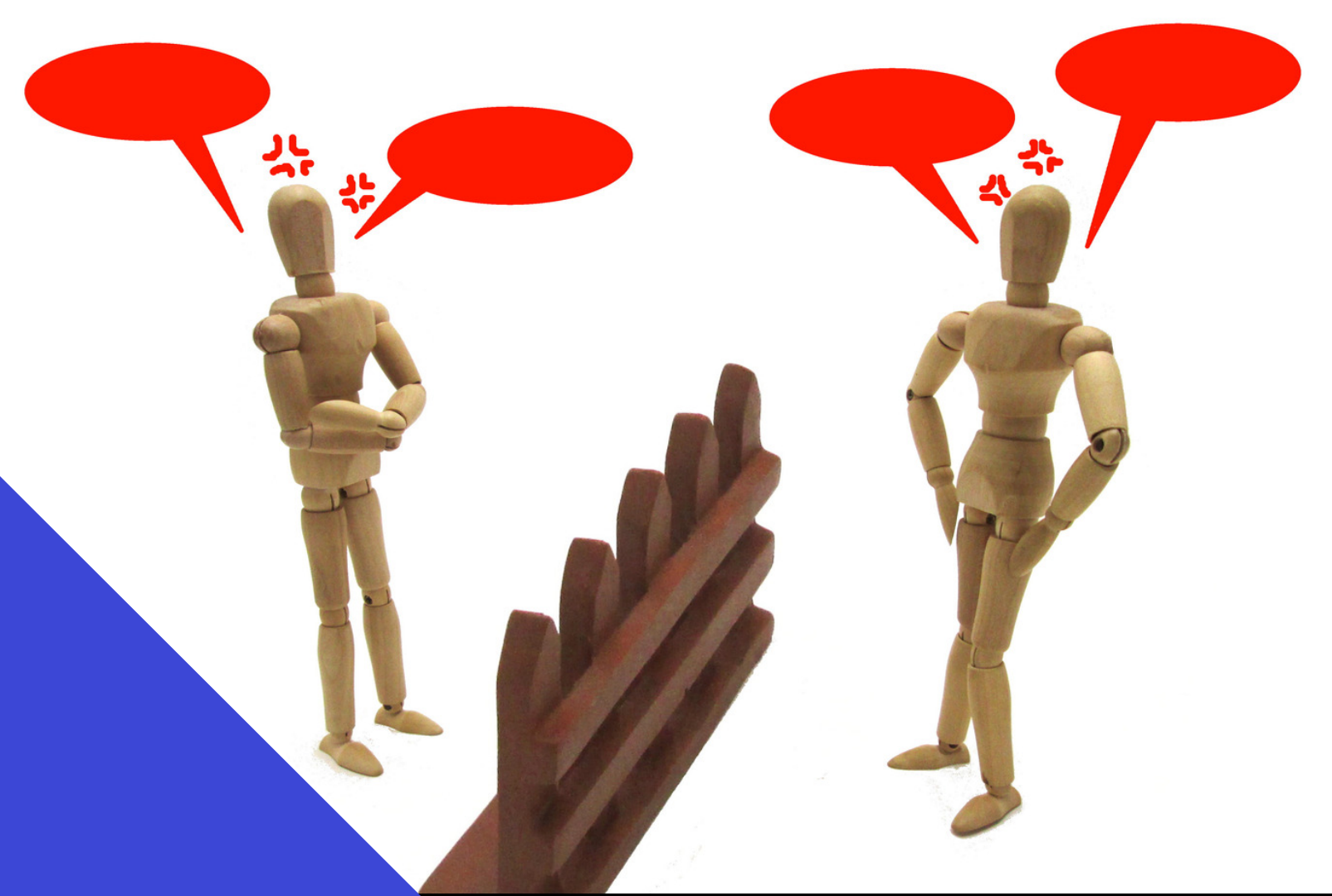
Navigating personal boundaries is something we all must do within our relationships.

Whether this is your first time volunteering, or you're a MABVI veteran, it's important to maintain personal boundaries so that the relationship between the volunteer and participant continues to be productive.

Maintaining boundaries must be mutual within the match; volunteer to participant, and participant to volunteer. **However, for onboarding purposes, this training focuses more specifically on boundary setting and techniques for the volunteer.**

**OUR **GOAL** IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE PARTICIPANT IS FEELING HELPED, THAT THE VOLUNTEER HAS A FULFILLING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE, AND NEITHER PARTY IS FEELING OVERWHELMED OR OVERUSED. IN A SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE MATCH, EVERYONE IS RESPECTING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES.**



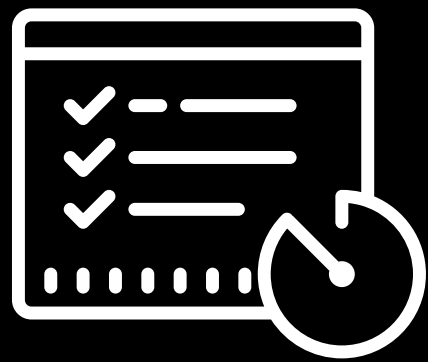


# WHAT ARE PERSONAL BOUNDARIES?

## PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Alike how the “No Trespassing” sign, defines where you end and others begin. They are determined by the amount of physical and emotional space you allow between yourself and others. Personal boundaries help you decide what types of communication, behavior, and interactions are acceptable.

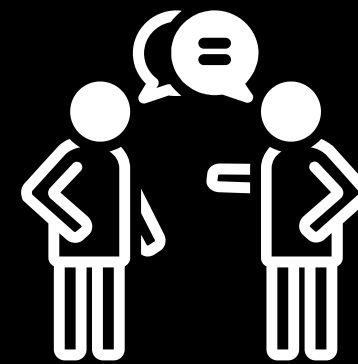
# Why is it important to set boundaries as a MABVI volunteer?



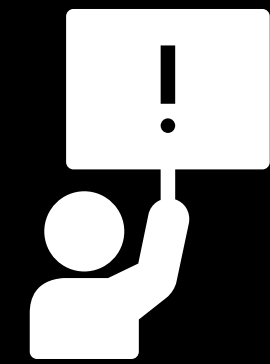
ACKNOWLEDGE  
AND SET  
HEALTHY  
LIMITS



PRACTICE  
SELF-CARE



MAINTAIN  
POSITIVE,  
HELPFUL  
INTERACTIONS

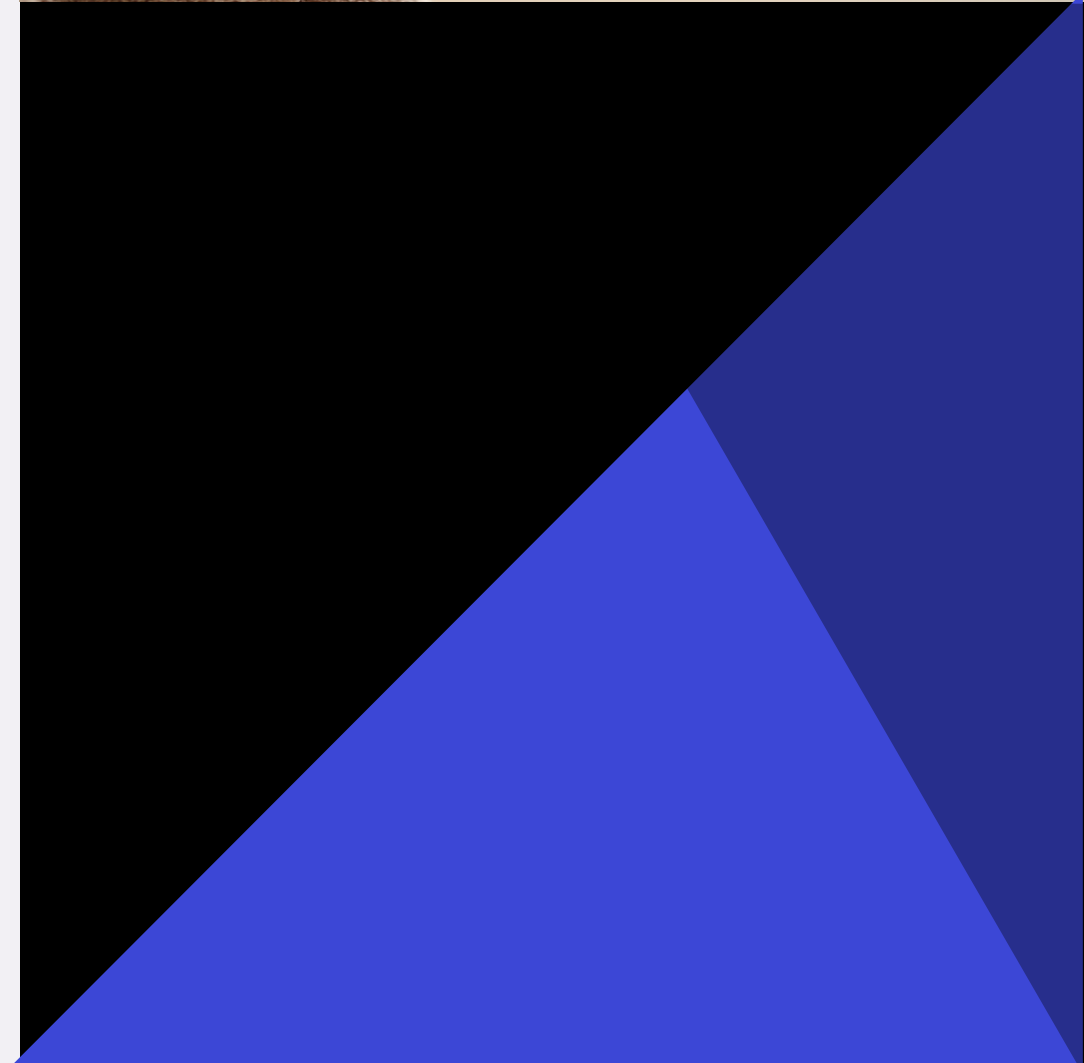


COMMUNICATE  
YOUR NEEDS TO  
YOUR MATCH

# BENEFITS OF SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

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- Share personal information gradually, in a mutually sharing and trusting relationship.
- Protect physical and emotional space from intrusion.
- Create an equal partnership where responsibility and power are shared.
- Confidently and truthfully say “yes” or “no” and be okay when the participant says “no” to you.
- Separate your needs, thoughts, feelings, and desires from the participant. Recognize that your boundaries and needs are different from theirs.
- Higher sense of respect for the participant and yourself.
- Empower yourself to make healthy choices and take responsibility for yourself.



# UNHEALTHY BOUNDARIES ARE CHARACTERIZED BY:



Inability to say “no” for fear of rejection or hurting the participant’s feelings.



Sharing too much too soon or, at the other end of the spectrum, closing yourself off and not expressing your needs and wants.



Disempowerment - you allow others to make decisions for you. Consequently, you feel powerless.



Feeling responsible for the participant’s happiness.



# **BOUNDARY ENCROACHING CAN HAPPEN BOTH WAYS**

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# **VOLUNTEER TO PARTICIPANT**

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Sometimes, when providing assistance, it is easy to think that we know what is best for the person we are matched with.

## **FOR EXAMPLE**

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We could suggest or even insist that the participant try a certain technology, even if they do not feel comfortable or want to try this technology. We push them to try something because it is "for their own good." The participant may feel pressured to do as the volunteer suggests so that the volunteer will continue to help.

# PARTICIPANT TO VOLUNTEER

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Sometimes, a participant can rely too heavily on the volunteer for assistance outside of their availability.

## FOR EXAMPLE

Calling the volunteer whenever something goes wrong, or asking for favors and errands outside of your normal meeting time. The volunteer agrees thinking it will be one time, but then it happens more frequently and the volunteer is not sure how to say 'No.'

# Be thoughtful about volunteering

- Participants are adults just like you, and need to make choices for themselves every day. They just happen to be living with vision loss.
- Make suggestions if you have an idea, or give advice if asked, but let the participant take it from there.
- Volunteering with a participant will increase equity, not save someone who is in need of saving.
- You have the right as a volunteer to be treated with kindness and respect.
- If you are unable to complete a certain task within a scheduled time, you are not responsible for making more time for the participant.
- Volunteers should not feel overused, or underappreciated by their participant match. It should be mutually beneficial, where fulfillment is equivalent to the time committed.

# MINDFUL VOLUNTEERING

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**THE EASIEST AND MOST  
EFFECTIVE WAY TO SET  
HEALTHY BOUNDARIES IS  
TO ESTABLISH THEM FROM  
THE BEGINNING.**

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# TAKE IT SLOW!

THE BEST WAY TO START OUT A NEW  
RELATIONSHIP IS TO TAKE THINGS  
SLOWLY.



# How to "take it slow" with your match

- **TAKE YOUR TIME GIVING OUT PERSONAL INFORMATION**
- **DO NOT OVER COMMIT OR OFFER FAVORS BECAUSE YOU THINK IT IS SOMETHING THE PARTICIPANT WANTS**
- **FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND, AND THE BEST WAY TO COMPLETE THE TASK THAT WORKS FOR BOTH YOU AND THE PARTICIPANT**
- **BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR AVAILABILITY AND TIME**
- **CHECK-IN WITH YOURSELF AND MAKE SURE YOU ARE FEELING FULFILLED BY THE MATCH ROLE**
- **DO NOT RUSH THROUGH VOLUNTEERING TO "CHECK IT OFF THE LIST"**



**EXAMPLES**

# FIRST TIME MEETING YOUR MATCH

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**Discuss** when you are available to help, and listen to the participant's schedule as well.

**Verbalize** a time frame with a beginning and an end.

**Example:**

Volunteer: "I am available Monday evenings for 2 hours, or Saturdays from 10-12pm."

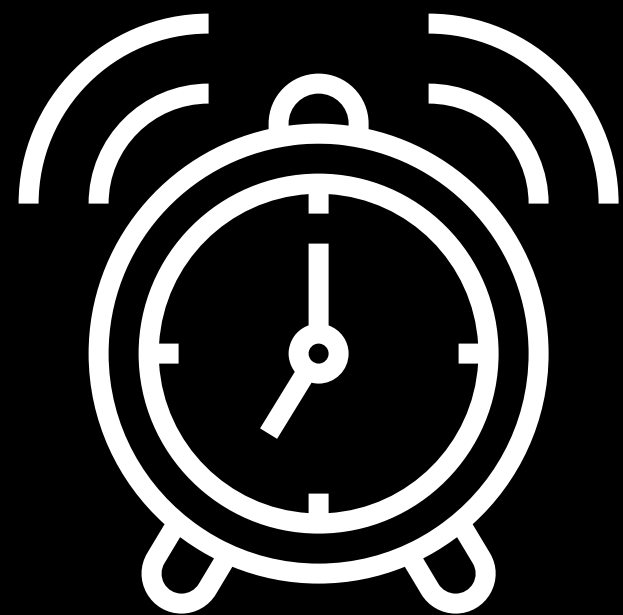
Try not to say, "I am free Monday evenings," or "Saturdays at 10am."



# REPEAT ONCE YOU HAVE SET A TIME

SETTING AN ALARM ON YOUR PHONE IS AN EASY WAY TO STAY ON THE SAME PAGE ABOUT TIMING. SO, IT DOES NOT COME AS A SURPRISE WHEN THE TIME COMES TO LEAVE.

Volunteer: “It’s 6:45 Sally. So, we have 15 minutes left. What do want to finish up here today?”



Do not wait for the participant to acknowledge the time or remember you need to leave at 7pm. It is not the participant's responsibility to hold you to your time frame.



Do not be afraid to tell the participant that you need to leave. If you do not speak up, then the boundary seems more like a suggestion.

# HOW DO WE SET BOUNDARIES IN AN ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP?

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# SCENARIO #1

**You have a great rapport with a participant. What started out as reading mail for two hours has crept into two and a half hours, and sometimes three hours. This is because you are joking more, laughing more, And they Are telling you stories. You really enjoy it, however, you are starting to get apprehensive about continuing the relationship because of the time commitment.**

# HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

## SCENARIO #1

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE PARTICIPANT'S HOME, ESTABLISH THE TIME YOU NEED TO LEAVE.

Volunteer: "Hi Sally, I have two hours this afternoon, so I will need to leave by 5pm."

### MAKE A PLAN

When you arrive, sort the mail so you are prioritizing the things that need attention.

### IF YOU SOCIALIZE DURING THE VISIT

You and the participant can be confident that the time sensitive things are taken care of.



# How to set healthy boundaries cont. scenario #1

- **SET AN ALARM ON YOUR PHONE, WITH A 30 MINUTE REMINDER SO YOU STAY ON TRACK.**

“It’s 4:30, we have half hour left. What should we tackle?”

- **VOICE THE PLAN AND GET ON THE SAME PAGE.**

“Let’s get your utility checks done straight away because these are due soon. Then you can show me that photo album.”

- **REMAIN CONSISTANT AND STICK TO YOUR TIME FRAME. IF YOU DO NOT GET TO ALL THE MAIL, THAT’S OKAY.**

Assure the participant that you will be back, but the important things are attended to.







# **BUILD CONSISTENCY**

## **WITH CONSISTENCY COMES TRUST.**

Try to arrive when you say you will, and leave when you say you will. If a volunteer is consistent, even if a lot of time is spent socializing, the participant can trust that the volunteer will be back. Consistency allows you to plan to do things that were not done this week, next week.

This eliminates the need to “stay until everything is finished.”

**Sometimes it is not possible to complete everything with the participant. This can be a little frustrating for the participant, and overwhelming for the volunteer.**

**You can always suggest that the participant have a second volunteer or be connected to more resources.**

**Please reach out to the volunteer department if you think this would be helpful.**

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# SCENARIO # 2

**You are meeting with a participant to help them pay their bills. The participant is having work done on their home, and you are writing the checks to pay the contractor. However, you observe that the work does not seem to be getting done. You are worried that the contractor might be taking advantage of this participant. You told the participant what you think, and yet she continues to have you write the checks.**

# HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

## SCENARIO #2

We encourage volunteers to voice any concern they have for the participant. What the participant does with that information is completely up to them. As a volunteer, you need to respect that decision.

### CORRECT WAY

Volunteer: Sally, each week I come over and write a check to the contractor, but I am worried that the work is not getting done.

Sally: Thank you for your concern, but I would like to continue writing the checks

Volunteer: Okay, I just wanted to tell you how I feel based on what I'm observing. I would feel terrible if I did not say anything and something happened.

Sally: Thank you, but I will chat with the contractor if I feel the need.



## INCORRECT WAY

Volunteer: Sally, each week I come over and write a check to the contractor, but I am worried that the work is not getting done.

Sally: Thank you for your concern, but I would like to continue writing the checks

Volunteer: No, I would rather not write checks to someone who is not getting the work done. I will go speak to them for you.

**IF YOU STILL FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH WHAT IS HAPPENING, YOU CAN CONTACT THE MABVI VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT AND WE WILL CHECK IN WITH THE PARTICIPANT ABOUT THE SITUATION.**

**In this scenario the volunteer needs to respect the boundaries of the participant, even if they are not "happy" with the situation, or would have handled it differently if the roles were reversed.**

**However, this is not for the volunteer to worry about. You are not responsible for making decisions for the participant. We encourage volunteers to voice concerns, ask questions or make suggestions to provide information. What the participant does with that information is up to them.**

**If you feel that the situation could bring harm to the consumer, we ask that you contact the volunteer department.**

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# SCENARIO #3

**You shop once a week at the grocery store for a participant. Last month, the participant needed a favor, and you obliged. This month, the participant, called you three times for other things. They asked you to pick prescriptions, help them take their cat to the vet, and asked if you could shovel their front walkway. You are happy to help out, but you are worried that this is only going to increase over time.**

# HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

## SCENARIO #3

ASK YOURSELF: ARE THESE TASKS APPROPRIATE FOR A MABVI VOLUNTEER TO BE DOING?

If 'yes', then decide what about this relationship is bothering you.

If the answer to this question is 'no' or you are unsure, then please contact the MABVI volunteer department.

IF THESE TASKS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR A MABVI VOLUNTEER, THEN ASK YOURSELF, "WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE WORK FOR ME?"

- Are you happy to do more errands but they need to be combined with your grocery shopping so it's not so sporadic?
- Are you only interested in volunteering for a specific time frame?
- Do you want to go back to just grocery shopping because you are not comfortable picking up prescriptions?
- Is it the frequent calling that is starting to bother you?





# IDENTIFYING YOUR LIMIT

Once you have identified what is bothering you, and what will make this volunteer experience work, it is time to address the participant. It helps to have a suggestion for a compromise. If you do not feel comfortable doing this, the volunteer department is here to help! We are happy to talk to the participant on your behalf.

## EXAMPLE

*Volunteer:* Hi Sally, I really enjoy grocery shopping for you, and I don't mind doing a few other errands, however I need to be able to do them in the two hours I have set aside for volunteering. I am unable to answer the phone each time you need a favor. Why don't I call you a few days before our scheduled shop, and if you have other errands we can plan how to fit them in.

**Stick to what you need and do not apologize for voicing your boundary. Remember, you are voicing this boundary because you want to continue to help, and this is how the relationship will remain sustainable.**

**Again, it is always helpful to suggest that someone get a second volunteer, or ask the MABVI volunteer department to suggest further resources.**

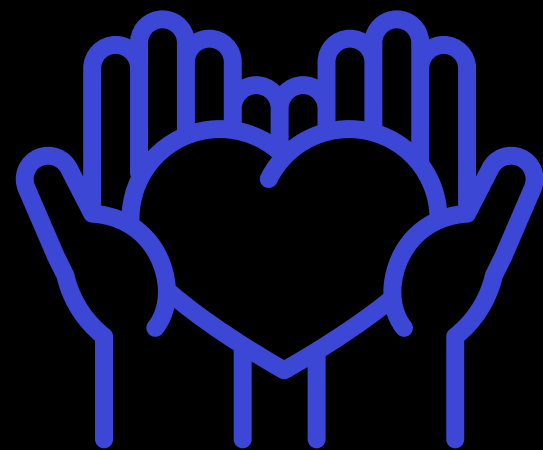
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1. When you identify the need to set a boundary, do it clearly, calmly, firmly, respectfully, and in as few words as possible. Do not justify, get angry, or apologize for the boundary you are setting.
2. You are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful manner. Plan on and expect possible questions but remain firm. Remember, your behavior must match the boundaries you are setting. You cannot successfully establish a clear boundary if you send mixed messages by apologizing.
3. At first, you will probably feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed when you set a boundary. Do it anyway and remind yourself you have a right to self-care. Setting boundaries takes practice and determination. Don't let anxiety, fear or guilt prevent you from taking care of yourself.
4. When you feel anger or resentment or start to dislike a relationship, you might need to set a boundary. Listen to yourself, determine what you need to do or say, then communicate assertively.
5. Learning to set healthy boundaries takes time. It is a process. Set them in your own time frame, not when someone else tells you.

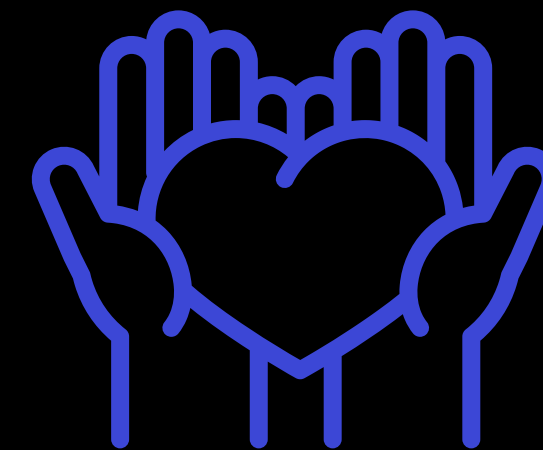
# TIPS FOR SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES



**WE ARE HERE TO HELP MAKE  
YOUR VOLUNTEER  
EXPERIENCE THE BEST IT  
CAN BE!**



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**Please do not forget about your number one resource, the MABVI Volunteer Department! We exist to make sure that you and the participant are having a beneficial relationship. If you feel that something is not quite right, let us know! We will always be available to talk through scenarios with you, brainstorm solutions and come up with a plan of action.**

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# LET'S TALK!

## EASTERN MA OFFICE

Address: 200 Ivy Street, Brookline, MA 02446

Contact: Alexandra Maggio, the Manager of Volunteer Services

Email: [amaggio@mabcommunity.org](mailto:amaggio@mabcommunity.org)

Call: (617) 972-9119

## CENTRAL MA OFFICE

Address: 799 West Boylston Street, Worcester, MA 01606

Contact: Neejaa Edmonds, Volunteer Coordinator

Email: [nedmonds@mabcommunity.org](mailto:nedmonds@mabcommunity.org)

Call: 508-854-1733 (X733)

