

**2023**



# **STAY IN YOUR LANE!**

**A GUIDE TO SET SAFE BOUNDARIES  
FOR RELATIONSHIPS, SOCIAL  
MEDIA, AND SEXUAL HEALTH**

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# Boundaries

**As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2023), a boundary is something that indicates or fixes a limit or extent. In the context of relationships, this definition relates to what author Melissa Urban (2022) defines boundaries as; clear limits you establish around allowing people to engage with you to keep yourself and your relationships safe and healthy.**

Setting boundaries is critical to constructing healthy relationships, increasing self-esteem, reducing stress, and promoting physical and emotional safety. A lack of boundaries invites others to determine your thoughts, feelings, and needs.

**Boundaries come in differing forms, including emotional, physical, and digital relationship boundaries.**

An example of an emotional boundary may look like this: telling your partner you care deeply for them, but are not ready to say "I love you" yet.

An example of a physical boundary may look like this: telling your partner where you do like and do not like being touched.

An example of a digital boundary may include deleting offensive comments from your social media posts.



**i honor my  
boundaries**



**As an individual, you are responsible for setting and maintaining your boundaries. This can be, and often is, easier said than done. It is hard for many people to set consistent boundaries and identify when these boundaries are being crossed.**

**How to identify if boundaries are being crossed:**

- Stay in tune with your feelings
  - Red flags include discomfort, resentment, stress, anxiety, guilt, and fear.
  - You are feeling pressured to change your boundaries.
  - You feel minimized or mocked about the boundaries you are trying to set.
- Recognize co-dependent behaviour
  - Avoiding conflict and people-pleasing may stem from feeling like you must sacrifice your boundaries to be loved or valued.
- Having to reset the same boundary multiple times
  - You have expressed discomfort, and the behaviour continues to occur.

**Three in ten people experience emotional, physical, or sexual abuse from someone they are in a relationship with. 2SLGBTQPIA+ individuals are at an increased risk for abuse due to facing specific barriers when it comes to boundary setting and maintenance.**

Barriers include, but are not limited to, internal conflict or embarrassment, fear of not being taken seriously, and real or perceived loss of community.





# Emotional Boundaries



Emotional boundaries also called personal boundaries, encompassing aspects of ourselves that seek to answer the question, “who am I, and what do I need.” In this sense, they fall into categories such as feelings, values, behaviour, desires, time, and energy.

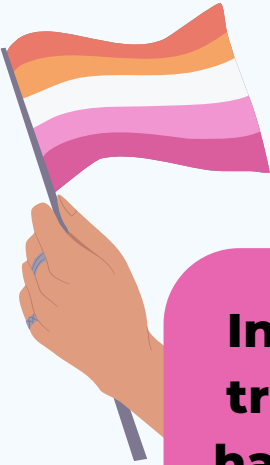
**Some ways that we are able to set and maintain emotional boundaries are to be committed to our own feelings, needs, and goals first.**

This stems from believing that you are okay the way that you are. These boundaries are acknowledged through not taking responsibility for the choices of others, acknowledging that you do not need to be needed, not changing yourself for the approval of others, and letting go of fixing or saving others.



## **Boundaries you can start with and build up;**

- Saying no - to tasks or events you do not want to do or have no time for
  - Saying yes - to help
  - Say thank you with no apology, regret or shame
  - Delegate tasks
  - Take time - do not overcommit
  - Ask for space - personal time is important and valuable
  - Honour what is important to you
  - Drop guilt and feeling responsible for others
  - Share thoughts, feelings, and goals gradually and mutually
- 



**In relationships, boundaries are premised on trust. A partner you can trust is reliable, you have confidence in them, and they make you feel safe physically and emotionally.**

- Setting up emotional boundaries;
  - Be self-aware
  - Without knowledge of the self, it can be challenging to express your needs, including likes and dislikes.
- Do not assume your partner's feelings
  - This can lead to misunderstandings of each person's wants and needs.
- Be clear and specific
  - When setting boundaries. Boundaries must be clearly and consistently worded, so you and your partner can follow through.
- Be sure to execute your boundaries, because not doing so can send a message to your partner that they can make excuses to overstep your boundaries since you do not uphold them.

#### **Examples of boundaries:**

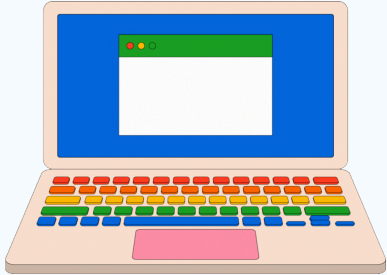
- My partner will discuss my pronouns and answer any questions with their parents before I meet them.
- We can follow each other on social media, but I will not share passwords.
- I need time to spend with my friends every week
- I need time for myself each week.
- I am comfortable with affection, but not in public.



# The Digital World



## Benefits of an Online Community and Relationships



Widely used and accepted way to find companionship and connections

Area to seek guidance about coming out

Access to answer queer-specific questions to understand sexuality and gender better

Discern identity through language accessed online

It provides a space to find community, acceptance, and support

The possibility of pursuing multiple potential partners simultaneously

Solidarity for those alienated from their family, friends or community

It provides an important virtual space for non-cisgender, non-heterosexuals, & transgender individuals

# However, the web can be a dangerous place...

LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF THE RISKS

Threatening comments

Homophobic and biphobic hate comments

Personal attacks

Cyberbullying leads many victims to depression or unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drugs, alcohol, and self-injury



Endorsement of pornographic self-presentation and quantification of bodies is promoted, including measures of height, weight, and genitals

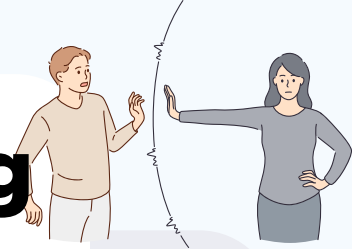
harassment that may or may not be sexual in nature

Sexism, misogyny, racism, and other forms of discrimination

#HATE

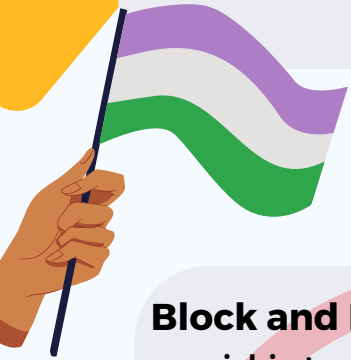
#BULLY





# Mitigating Risks & Setting Safe Boundaries in...

## THE DIGITAL WORLD



**Block and Report** abusive users to avoid interacting with them at all

If blocking is not an option...

- Manually **remove comments** to delete the offensive responses quickly
- **Report the incident** to the platform
- **Create private profiles, lists, and groups** so you can choose to include the people you trust

**Keep personal information private**

When interacting with individuals that you do not know, you should consider avoiding the following personal details:

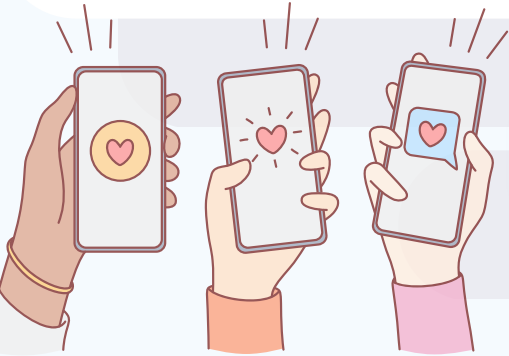
- **Address and contact information:** cyberbullying is one thing, but having an aggressor know these details can put you in physical danger
- **Real Names:** in a highly technological society, people can quickly connect the dots to figure out who you and your friends are
- **Links to social media:** Keeping your social media private can be essential if you comment in forums. While being attacked on a thread is one thing, social media accounts have a lot more personal information that could escalate harassment to a new level







# Mitigating Risks & Setting Safe Boundaries When...



## ONLINE DATING & SEXTING

**What is Sexting?**  
"Sexual communication with content that includes pictures and text messages, sent using cell phones or other electronic media."



### Online Dating

Meeting someone you connected with online could potentially be risky... It is important to maintain a strategy to stay safe

- **Do not meet at home:** strangers should not know where you live until you have vetted them, and going to a stranger's house poses many risks of its own
- **Inform a friend** of all the details of your arrangement (where you are meeting, and when you will be back), and if possible share your location with them
- **Do your research before meeting,** and many individuals have a social media presence that you can use to validate their identity
- **Utilize personal safety apps** or built-in phone applications that enable you to contact local law enforcement or friends in the case of an emergency

Do **NOT** sext with individuals you do not trust

Nude pictures stored on your devices, whether they are for you or others, pose the **risk of falling into the wrong hands...**

This may result in embarrassment or devastating effects on your personal and professional life

- **Use an app** to secretly and safely store your photos
- If sending scandalous photos, use a platform that **automatically deletes** them from both phones afterwards
  - However... There are ways to get around this, such as the recipient taking a screenshot or saving your photos in another way leading back to the main point of **never sexting with someone you do not trust.**



**Physical theft** is not the only way your photos may be exposed... **Hackers** are becoming incredibly sophisticated & can locate your intimate information without you even knowing it.

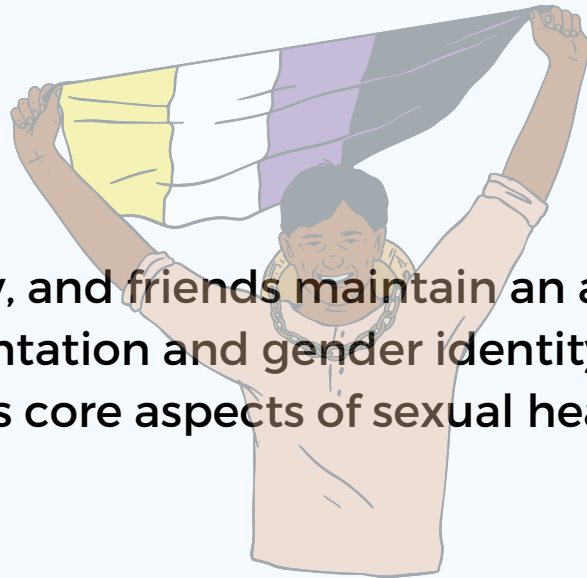
**Implement several layers of protection** → download anti-virus software, use two-factor authentication (2FA) on all your accounts, always use a virtual private network (VPN) when using unsecured public Wi-Fi, and only download trusted apps.

# Sexual Health



A state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being concerning sexuality

Gold standard: People, family, and friends maintain an attitude of accepting people's sexual orientation and gender identity, especially healthcare providers, as core aspects of sexual health



**Promoting your own sexual health ... Educate!**



It is one of the most significant ways of promoting your own sexual health, as it allows you to educate yourself to ask the questions, and make those informed decisions, to take control of your sexual health!

... psst reading this guide is a good start!

# Setting boundaries in ...



## SEXUAL ACTIVITIES

**Consent is a VOLUNTARY agreement to participate**

**Communication** is one of the most significant players in promoting safer sex. Ensure that consent is being made, and understand that, for example, a previous "yes", is a form of implied consent, and does **NOT** qualify for consent

Other important communication techniques include letting your partner know where you like, and do not like being touched, asking what nouns, verbs, and adjectives you and your partner find affirming, and being on the same page on **safer sex practices**

This may be difficult or awkward at first to approach the conversation, but not only is it respecting your own boundaries and needs, but it is also respecting your partners' as well



# Barrier Methods for Safer Sex

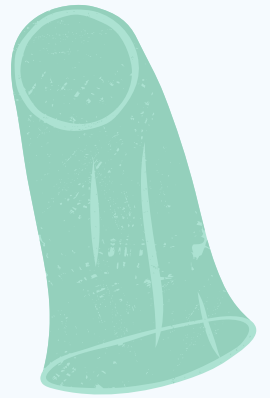


## External Condoms

The most common form of protection used during sexual activities is condoms. It is applied to the penis, but can also be used on sex toys for easier clean-up. Condoms offers STI prevention and contraception. **Where?** Most convenience stores and gas stations will have it, and some sex clinics will offer them for free.

## Internal Condoms

They are applied to the inner lining of the vagina or anus. A closed ring will be placed inside, while an open rim hangs just outside the opening. The body part or toy will then go into the open rim of the inside condom. Although people may be hesitant to try this method, it offers a 95% range for STI prevention and contraception, failing to reach higher due to a higher rate of misuse. **Where?** In Kamloops, we found that One Stop Love Shop has these condoms, but other sex stores may also carry them.

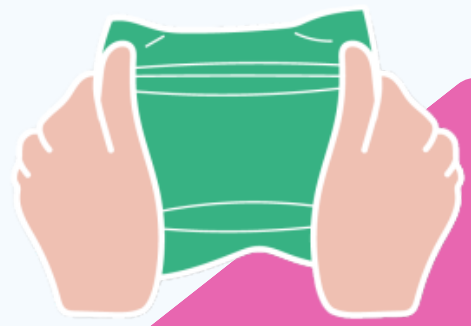


## Gloves and Finger Cots

These can be used to protect the genitals from the germs found in fingers, or the nail, during finger stimulation through anal or genital play. They, of course, also protect the person donning the glove, so it works for both parties! Ensure that you use only one glove per body part to maintain cleanliness. **Where?** On our search within Kamloops, London Drugs and Shoppers Drug Mart were the places to find both.

## Dental Dams

Latex or polyurethane sheets used between the mouth, vagina, or anus during sexual activities. They protect against STIs and are not specifically used for preventing contraception. To use one, you would place the protective envelope over the area, allowing it to stick with moisture, with a water or silicone-based lube if needed, and dispose of it after one use. **Where?** Within Kamloops, we have found that AdultZ sells dental dams, but other sex stores and dentists may also have them.



# Contraceptives for Transgender and Non-binary people

## Trans people assigned female at birth

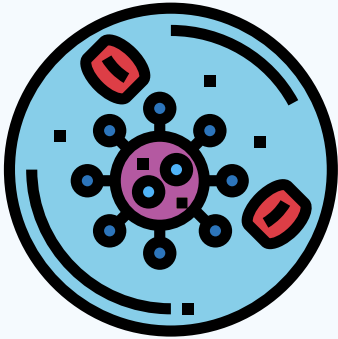
- Testosterone therapy does not provide adequate contraceptive protection!
- Speak to your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking testosterone; pregnancy is an absolute contraindication to testosterone therapy, and may cause serious harm to the developing fetus
- Emergency contraception (aka Plan B), **CAN** be taken while on testosterone and will not alter its treatment

## Trans people assigned male at birth

- Estradiol therapy does not provide adequate contraception protection!
- Those who have not undergone an orchidectomy or vasectomy should still ensure that effective contraception is used if they are having vaginal sex, with a risk of pregnancy, and their partner does not wish to conceive.



# Pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV



Also known as PrEP, it is a treatment plan used by HIV-negative people to help prevent the transmission of HIV. Most prominent in the gay community, but can be used by all members at risk for contracting HIV.



**Where:** Some healthcare providers can prescribe PrEP to you, but if you are having difficulty, we encourage you to try Freddie. Scanning the QR code on the page will send you to their website. They are an interdisciplinary team, with a pharmacy based in Calgary, that aims to provide Canadians affordable, accessible, and affirming care for PrEP through online means.



**How:** Being prescribed PrEP will include medical visits every three months for HIV testing, screening, and ongoing support. Through Freddie, you will first make an account, and follow through the same steps with nurses and clinicians by phone and virtually.



**Boundaries:** Asking for your partner's HIV status is part of developing a healthy boundary for your sexual health. Now knowing the information about HIV and PrEP in this guide, you may decide that it might be beneficial that you both go on PrEP. However, it all starts with having that conversation, and creating that boundary to keep yourself comfortable, but most importantly, safe. If you find that your partner is not respecting your boundary and is adamant about not getting tested, it may be time to consider if this relationship is in line with your needs and expectations for a partner.



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