



Negotiating & Boundary Setting in POLY+ Relationships

WELCOME! Class will start soon.

While you wait, please feel free to use the chat box to write your name, pronouns, and where you are Zooming in from!

What to expect

- ▶ We will be muting everyone to reduce background noise.
- ▶ Please use the chat box for immediate questions or responses. We will have a formal Q&A at the end.
- ▶ Please treat each other with respect and respect everyone's right to confidentiality.
- ▶ If you have a partner in the class, please do not share anything about them or any of their partners.
- ▶ Class format: some lecture, some dialogue, some roleplay!

About IMPACT

IMPACT is a nonprofit organization that works to prevent violence and abuse by giving people the tools to protect their safety and advocate for healthy relationships and sexual respect in their communities and society.

For more information, visit us at:

impactboston.org

*What is a
boundary?*

A boundary is...

- ▶ A clear line between what is acceptable or safe for you and what is not.
- ▶ Something you get decide for yourself at any time, in relation to anyone.

Boundaries

Relationship Agreements

About someone's behavior toward you	About someone's behavior with someone else
Can be set anytime	Ideally this is decided ahead of time
Negotiation is not appropriate - this is just about you	Negotiation may be needed if affected parties are not in agreement
Can be set with anyone	Only makes sense in the context of your relationship - You wouldn't make a "rule" with an acquaintance
Can be revisited if you change your mind	May need to be revisited as relationships change

What are some boundaries you might want or need to set in a relationship?

*[Try to stick to boundaries that are
limits for yourself, not about anyone's
behavior with anyone else.]*

**What are different ways
people respond when we
set boundaries?**

Negative Responses (Why?)

- ▶ They feel...
 - ▶ Embarrassed
 - ▶ Like they are “in trouble” - like when you were a kid & you did something wrong
 - ▶ Bad about themselves
- ▶ Responding with defensiveness or by minimizing your boundary is a way to deflect those feelings & throw them back at you - you’re the one with the problem, not them. It’s an avoidance of having to experience & work through negative emotions.

How We Communicate

- ▶ **Tone**

- ▶ Aim for: calm & assertive

- ▶ **Body Language**

- ▶ Aim for: shoulders relaxed, head up, eye contact, limited movement, neutral facial expression (all within ability and when appropriate)

- ▶ If our tone or body language is aggressive or sounds/looks annoyed, the other person may not hear our words

- ▶ If our tone or body language conveys uncertainty, our message is not as powerful & the other person may not believe us

Boundary Setting Scenarios

- ▶ Your partner presses you for details about the sex you're having with other partners more than you're comfortable with
- ▶ Your partner vents about other relationships too much
- ▶ Your partner makes fun of you in a way that bothers you

*What is a
negotiation?*

A negotiation is...

- ▶ A discussion aimed at reaching an agreement.
- ▶ The goal is to find a compromise or agreement that satisfies both parties.
- ▶ Negotiation is based on fairness, mutual benefit, and maintaining the relationship.
- ▶ Negotiations in poly relationships often involve more than 2 people and might need to be re-visited as new people come into the picture/relationships change.

Compromise: An agreement that is reached by each side making concessions.

Example: I want Indian food (they dislike it), you want BBQ (I'm vegetarian) - let's just get Japanese food.

Quid Pro Quo: Something given or received in exchange for something else.

Example: They can pick the movie if I can pick the restaurant.

What are some needs or points of conflict in relationships (poly or otherwise) that might require negotiation?

Steps for Negotiation

1. What needs to be negotiated?
2. What is your history with this person?
3. What do you WANT? (*Your ideal outcome*)
4. What are you UNWILLING to accept? (*Your bottom line*)
5. What are you WILLING to accept? (*The compromise*)

Strategies for Negotiation

▶ THINK

- ▶ Know your ideal & bottom line
- ▶ Know your partner's sore spots
- ▶ When is the best time to have this convo?
- ▶ Set guidelines if needed

▶ LISTEN

- ▶ Repeat back what they just said to you, make sure you understand it
- ▶ Take time to reflect - silence is ok
- ▶ Listen nonjudgmentally

▶ CLARIFY

- ▶ What's their ideal & bottom line?
- ▶ Is there room for compromise?
- ▶ Ask how they're feeling - no assumptions

▶ BRAINSTORM

- ▶ List options that are between your & bottom line

▶ REMEMBER

- ▶ Stay focused - don't get sidetracked
- ▶ It's you two vs. the problem
- ▶ Make sure the final compromise works for everyone

Negotiation Scenarios

- ▶ You want your partner to do more of the house chores
- ▶ You want more time with your partner (could be alone time, could be total time)
- ▶ You want to meet your partner's new partners before they're "official"

What is Adrenaline?

- ▶ Adrenaline is a hormone produced in the body when there is a perceived threat or danger (the threat may be psychological).
- ▶ It is commonly known as the body's flight/fight/freeze response.
- ▶ Adrenaline responses are normal survival mechanisms that can help us react quickly to uncomfortable or life-threatening situations.

*What changes do you
notice in your body
when you feel stress?*

Adrenaline Management & Grounding Techniques

- ❖ Finding your breathing
- ❖ Points of Contact
- ❖ Tapping
- ❖ Positive Imagery

Remember...

- ▶ Boundary setting & negotiating in relationships takes practice.
- ▶ Boundaries are healthy & good for you & your relationship. They do not make you less poly.
- ▶ Negotiating when there are 2+ people involved is complicated; agreements may need to be re-visited.
- ▶ This is all hard but can be so rewarding (like poly!)



Questions? Connect with us!

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Support Resources:

<http://impactboston.org/resources/support-services/>

Feedback Form:

<https://forms.gle/g7eAFo6A96Qn8fkM8>



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