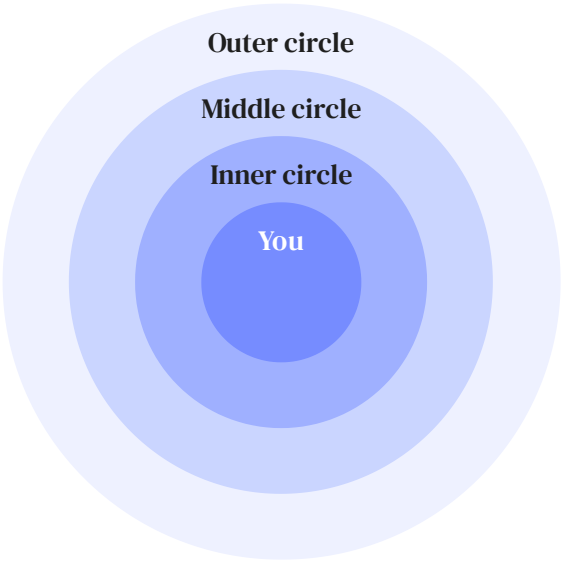
Boundaries Circle

Relationships: Types of Boundaries for Each Circle of People

A boundaries circle shows how close each person in your life is to you, so you can decide what each person gets from you. Psychologists Robert Kahn and Toni Antonucci described the people around us as a convoy that travels with us through life, and Antonucci mapped it as three circles around the self. This worksheet borrows those circles, widens the outer one to include people you know less well, and matches types of boundaries to each.

1 Your three circles



Inner circle: people so close that it is hard to imagine life without them, such as a partner, best friend or close family.

Middle circle: people who matter to you but are not quite as close, such as good friends or relatives you see often.

Outer circle: people you know and see, such as coworkers, neighbors, classmates or acquaintances.

Strangers sit outside all three circles.

My inner circle	My middle circle	My outer circle

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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2 Types of boundaries

- **Physical:** touch, space and privacy.
- **Emotional:** feelings and stories you share.
- **Time:** your time and attention.
- **Digital:** phone, messages, posts and photos.
- **Money and things:** lending and sharing.
- **Sexual:** what you agree to, and with whom.

Why does this work? *Matching boundaries to closeness helps you trust the right people with the right things. Relationships also change over time, so people can move between circles, and your boundaries can move with them.*

3 What each circle gets

For each type of boundary, write what is okay for people in each circle. The first row is filled in as an example.

Type	Inner circle	Middle circle	Outer circle
Physical	*Long hugs, sitting close*	*A quick hug or a high five*	*A handshake or a wave*
Emotional			
Time			
Digital			
Money and things			

Sexual boundaries belong to you alone. Being in your inner circle never gives anyone a right to sex or touch you do not want.

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4 Check your circles

Is anyone getting more access than their circle fits? Who, and in what way?

Is anyone you would like to be closer to being kept too far out?

One boundary I want to change, and what I will say or do:

If someone keeps crossing a boundary after you have stated it clearly, that tells you something about which circle they belong in. If anyone makes you feel unsafe, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is free and confidential in the US: call 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788.

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