

Setting Boundaries with Family: Addressing Issues Promptly

Inevitably, in families, issues arise and boundaries can be damaged. Key to maintaining healthy dynamics and avoiding frustration is addressing the problems as they appear.

Here are several scenarios that might be similar to the ones you face within your family. Here's an example of how you could respond given the space to come up with your own strategy:

Situation One: You've planned a lunch outdoors with your family. The restaurant has a strict ten-minute window for holding reservations, and a family member is known for their lateness.

Possible response:

Before the day of the lunch, you might say, "I want to remind everyone that the restaurant will only hold our reservation for ten minutes. It's important we are all on time to enjoy our meal together. If anyone thinks they'll be late, please let me know in advance so we can tell the restaurant."

Your preferred response:

Situation Two: A family member frequently asks for your advice on personal matters, such as their marriage. During a conversation, they mention considering separation from their partner.

Possible response:

"I care about you and want to support you, but I feel uncomfortable giving advice on such personal matters. It might be more helpful to talk to a professional who can provide the guidance you're looking for."

Your preferred response:

Situation Three: You discover a family member shares your personal information with other relatives or friends.

Possible response:

"I've heard that some of my personal information is being shared with others. I want to keep certain things private, and it's important to me that you respect my privacy. Let's agree to keep our conversations just between us, or please ask me first if you think something should be shared."

Your preferred response:

Next, work through several commonly occurring examples with your own family:

Situation:

Your preferred response:

Situation:

Your preferred response:

Situation:

Your preferred response:

Situation:

Your preferred response:

Addressing boundary violations promptly and directly helps prevent misunderstandings and maintains the integrity of your relationships. It's about expressing your needs and expectations clearly and respectfully, ensuring that family members understand and respect your boundaries.

References

- Tawwab, N. G. (2021). Set boundaries workbook: Practical exercises for understanding your needs and setting healthy limits. Little Brown Book Group.

Dr. Jeremy Sutton, PhD.