

Transitioning Home for the Holidays

MU Counseling Center

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Going home during intersession can be a challenge. You and your family have likely changed in the time that you have been away at school. This may require you to make some changes in your interactions with them. It is often necessary to set boundaries with family and friends upon returning home after being away at school. A boundary is a limit or edge that defines you as separate from others. It is a limit that promotes integrity.

Steps for setting boundaries:

- Identify the boundaries you need to set.
 - Try to determine if you have trouble setting boundaries with specific people or specific situations. For example, you may be able to set a boundary with friends, but you may find it more difficult to do with your parents or other family members.
- You have a right to set boundaries.
 - Many people mistakenly believe that setting boundaries upsets other people. While others may not get what they want in the short run, you will garner more respect from them and for yourself by standing up for your needs.
- Make a short affirmation to describe your new boundary.
 - An example would be, "I get to decide how to spend my time." or "My time is valuable and irreplaceable." Use whatever words are most powerful for you. Use an affirmation to remind you that setting boundaries is the right thing to do.
- Rehearse what you want to say.
 - Talk to yourself in the mirror, write in your journal, tape record yourself, or find a trusted friend to role-play with. This is new behavior. The more you practice it, the better you will become.
- Offer options to the other person.
 - Look for a win-win situation. Negotiate alternatives. For example, "I know that you would like to speak with me. Right now I need to finish this task. Can I call you later or would tomorrow be better?"
- Communicate without anger.
 - Be clear and respectful. Use language that feels comfortable to you.
- Relax.
 - Before you respond, breathe deeply. Give yourself time to speak calmly and communicate clearly.