

Opening the Communication
so you and your kids can talk about *ANYTHING!*

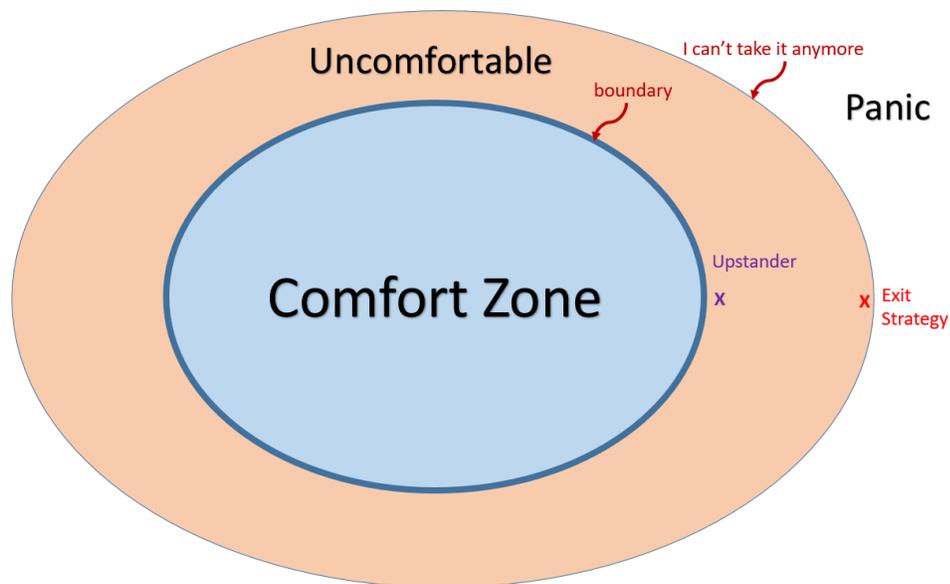
Boundaries in community

Navigating boundaries with friends and family is one thing, and being proactive about your boundaries with your community is rather different. You're relationship with your teammates or classmates or coworkers is not as close. There's less of a relationship. You have some influence, but much less than with those in your intimate circle.

Conflict is not easy; many of us run from it. The person who can stand up for what they believe in, even when they're not sure what the result will be, is admired. They are our leaders and change makers. They are *Upstanders*, not bystanders. They make sure that an off-color remark is addressed, so that the person who said it knows it was offensive. Otherwise, that person might actually think what they said was cool, because people laughed.

Using our boundaries framework, an Upstander is someone who recognizes something wrong with the social dynamic because they feel their boundary get crossed. They then take action to correct the situation. They recognize that their sensitivity is an asset! Others may not be aware of what exactly is wrong, so unable to take action. The Upstander is a leader, a change maker, and ultimately will be recognized for it, for being a good citizen.

It takes some capacity to bravely put forth your opinion and confront someone about what they said or did. It's really only possible if you're promptly defending a boundary. Waiting until things become too uncomfortable to bear decreases your ability to be the cool head in the room, the creative problem solver, the articulate change maker. If the situation has really taken a turn for the worse, then your first responsibility is to yourself, and what you need is an Exit Strategy.



Becoming an Upstander

This is a skill. It takes practice. Start small and easy, and build up to bigger confrontations. Rather than making “a big deal” out of something, do the little version. I call this a “soft” confrontation.

- Confront someone you’re relatively comfortable with.
- Pick a boundary that has been crossed regularly or in the recent past.
- Pick your moment to state how you felt.
- Move on quickly.

Examples:

I heard you talking about Jaimie, calling her a “whore” because she pissed you off, and I get it, but talking about our friend like that isn’t ok. Anyway...what do we have to do for that history project?

I can tell you didn’t like the sub today in history class. But throwing spitballs at him – that’s not cool. So what are you doing your research paper on?

Moving on quickly is key. The longer the pause, the more intense it is for the other person. They might think you’re expecting a response or even an apology, and they’ll get defensive. The goal here is to simply slip in the information, that something someone did was not well received, and then continue the relationship as normal.

If the other person gets angry or if they want to get into a larger discussion, that’s ok. Stay centered. Point out that you’ve judged that person’s *actions*, not them. Say, “If I did something you thought was wrong, I’d want you to tell me, so that I can be more aware of it. I just thought you should know.”

A “hard” confrontation follows the arc of the ABCs. It might be in 1-2 sentences or over a 5 minute conversation. Keep it casual.

-  A: acknowledge their perspective
-  B: state your boundary, your feelings
-  C: commit to a course of action, volunteer to help make the change

Examples:

Everyone’s had such a great time at this party! But man, people are getting really sloshed. I’m afraid someone’s going to get hurt. Why don’t we take the tap off the keg for a while?

I can tell you really like him. But honestly, I’m worried that you’ve both drunk too much. Let me take you home.