

4 W's: Practicing Boundaries

4 scenarios

Situation 1: I am around someone who wants to be near me but I feel uncomfortable because they may be sick or infected with COVID-19.

My friend Harry told me they went to the movies with a bunch of friends I don't know. I am worried they could have been infected but I don't know yet if they are. Harry calls me and asks if they can come over to my apartment to hang out.

Who: This is a friend and I would feel unsafe if they came to my apartment.

When: I am on the phone with them and need to give them an answer right away.

Where: I am not near this person right now so I am safe telling them what I think.

What to say: Harry, thank you for asking to come hang out at my house.

However, I would like to reschedule for a later time. I am keeping self-isolated and trying to keep myself healthy at this time. I would like to hang out with you in the future though!

Situation 2: I am around someone I know who is not following the COVID-19 CDC guidelines of social distancing and/or they are not wearing a mask.

I am meeting my friend Susan at a park so we can have a chance to take a walk and see each other. However, my friend arrives and is not wearing a mask and she doesn't seem too concerned about how close she is to me.

Who: This is a friend or someone I am familiar with and they are not following the CDC guidelines and I do not feel safe.

When: Since I am with this person right now, I need to share my feelings right away.

Where: Since I am away from my home, do I have a way to get home if my friend gets mad and continues to not follow the social distancing or mask rules?

What to say: Susan, would you please keep your mask on for my safety? Would you please keep the 6-foot distance so I can feel comfortable?

Read each situation and follow the questions within each "W" in the 4-W's Boundaries Skill sheet. Write your answer below each W's question on the Boundaries skill sheet.

After deciding what and how you are going to handle each situation below, it may be helpful to role play with a "trusted person" to become more comfortable if you experience anything similar to these situations.

Situation 3: I am around someone I do not know who is not following the COVID-19 CDC guidelines of social distancing and/or they are not wearing a mask

I am in a grocery store and around someone I do not know who is not following the COVID-19 CDC guidelines of social distancing and/or they are not wearing a mask.

Who: This person is a stranger that I do not know and they are not following the CDC guidelines and I do not feel safe.

When: I am in a grocery store and I have the opportunity to move away from this person. I don't need to say anything to this stranger right at this time.

Where: Since I am in a grocery store by myself, I can make a choice to move away from the person who is not following the rules. I don't need to say anything at this time.

What to say: It may be best to not say anything to a stranger in this situation.

Situation 4: A friend on the internet has posted something that is not true about COVID-19 and I feel uncomfortable about other people seeing this misinformation.

My friend Jake made a post on social media that said masks aren't necessary and told people not to follow the CDC guidelines.

Who: This is someone who is my "friend" on Facebook. I have never met them. They just make posts that I can see on my page. This makes me feel uncomfortable because it is spreading untruths to others.

When: Since I am at home and not with this person right now, I don't need to share right away. I am not being asked to do something.

Where: Since I am currently at home, I am in a safe environment. However, I need to decide if it's necessary to post a reply. It may be better to ignore the post and not look at the messages this person is posting.

What to say: If I decided to post a response, it would be best to just make a reference to science based factual websites and stay away from language that might be considered by others as rude or attacking this person for what they believe. The best thing I can do is provide good information sources to others. And remind myself that I can't control or change what other people think or say. I also can remind myself that my "friends on Facebook" are all "choices" I have made "to friend them." I can choose who I will be friends with at any time.