



RESOURCE 3.4

MANAGING EXTENDED FAMILY AND FRIEND DYNAMICS

HVL Connect Client Resource

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Purpose: This resource helps you navigate relationships with extended family and friends while protecting and prioritizing your partnership.

When to use this:

- You're experiencing family or friend conflict
- You're setting boundaries with family
- You're blending families
- You're navigating in-law relationships
- Friends or family are impacting your relationship
- You're preparing for marriage or commitment
- You need to establish healthy boundaries
- You're dealing with toxic family dynamics

What this resource provides:

- Understanding of common family/friend challenges
- Boundary-setting tools and scripts
- Communication strategies
- Conflict resolution approaches
- Decision-making frameworks
- Specific guidance for in-laws, parents, friends, and more

Important: Your relationship comes first. Healthy boundaries protect both your partnership and your other relationships.



INTRODUCTION: THE BALANCING ACT

Why This Is Challenging

WHEN YOU COMMIT TO A PARTNER:

- You're creating a new primary family unit
- You're balancing loyalty to partner and family of origin
- You're navigating different family cultures
- You're setting new boundaries
- You're managing expectations
- You're protecting your relationship

This is normal and necessary work.

Common Challenges

TYPICAL ISSUES

With parents/in-laws:

- Overinvolvement or intrusion
- Unsolicited advice
- Boundary violations
- Favoritism or comparison
- Holiday and event conflicts
- Financial entanglement
- Childcare expectations (if you have kids)

With siblings:

- Competition or comparison
- Different values or lifestyles
- Boundary issues
- Family drama spillover

With friends:

- Jealousy or feeling left out
- Different life stages
- Inappropriate behavior
- Loyalty conflicts
- Time management



Between families:

- Different expectations
- Competing for time
- Cultural differences
- Holiday conflicts

The Foundation: Your Partnership Comes First

CORE PRINCIPLE

Your partner is your primary family now.

This means:

- Their needs come before extended family
- You're a team, united front
- You protect each other
- You make decisions together
- You set boundaries together
- You prioritize your relationship

This doesn't mean:

- Abandoning your family
- Never seeing them
- Being disrespectful
- Cutting people off (unless necessary)

It means:

- Healthy boundaries
- Clear priorities
- Mutual respect
- Balance



PART 1: SETTING BOUNDARIES

Understanding Boundaries

BOUNDARIES ARE:

- Limits you set to protect yourself and your relationship
- What you will and won't accept
- How you want to be treated
- What you need to feel safe and respected

BOUNDARIES ARE NOT:

- Controlling others
- Punishment
- Manipulation
- Selfish

Boundaries are healthy and necessary.

Types of Boundaries

PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES:

- Personal space
- Your home
- Physical affection
- Privacy

Examples:

- "Please call before coming over"
- "We need our own space"
- "We're not comfortable with unannounced visits"

EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES:

- What you share
- What you keep private
- Emotional labor you'll do
- How you want to be treated

Examples:

- "That's between my partner and me"
- "I'm not comfortable discussing that"
- "Please don't put me in the middle"



TIME BOUNDARIES:

- How much time you spend
- When you're available
- Protecting couple time
- Balancing commitments

Examples:

- "We can visit for 2 hours"
- "We need our weekends for us"
- "We'll see you once a month"

FINANCIAL BOUNDARIES:

- Money you lend/give
- Financial independence
- Shared finances
- Expectations about money

Examples:

- "We can't lend money right now"
- "We make our own financial decisions"
- "We're not comfortable with that expense"

COMMUNICATION BOUNDARIES:

- How you communicate
- What topics are off-limits
- Respectful communication standards
- Frequency of contact

Examples:

- "Please don't call after 9pm"
- "We need you to speak respectfully"
- "That topic is off-limits"



How to Set Boundaries

THE BOUNDARY-SETTING PROCESS

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE NEED

What boundary do you need?

Why do you need it?

What's being violated or what do you need to protect?

STEP 2: DISCUSS WITH PARTNER

Get on same page:

- What boundary do we need?
- Are we both comfortable with this?
- How will we communicate it?
- How will we enforce it?
- What if they push back?

Our agreed boundary:

STEP 3: COMMUNICATE THE BOUNDARY

Be clear and direct:

- State the boundary
- Explain why (brief, not defensive)
- Be kind but firm
- Don't over-explain or apologize

**Formula:**

"We need [boundary] because [brief reason]. We'd appreciate your support with this."

Example:

"We need you to call before coming over because we value our privacy and need advance notice. We'd appreciate your support with this."

Your script:

STEP 4: ENFORCE THE BOUNDARY**If violated:**

- Remind them calmly
- Restate the boundary
- Follow through with consequence
- Be consistent

Example:

"We asked you to call before coming over. Since you didn't, this isn't a good time. We'll see you another time when we've planned it."

Your enforcement plan:

STEP 5: MAINTAIN THE BOUNDARY**Stay consistent:**

- Don't waiver
- Support each other
- Expect pushback (it's normal)
- Stand firm together

Common Boundary Scripts**"We need advance notice before visits."**

"We love seeing you, but we need you to call or text before coming over. Our schedule is busy and we need to plan visits. Thank you for understanding."



"We make our own decisions."

"We appreciate your input, but we need to make this decision ourselves. We'll let you know what we decide."

"That's between us."

"I appreciate your concern, but that's something between my partner and me. We'll handle it."

"We need time as a couple."

"We're prioritizing time together right now. We'll plan a visit with you soon, but this weekend is for us."

"Please speak respectfully."

"I need you to speak respectfully about my partner. If you can't, we'll need to end this conversation."

"We can't lend money."

"We're not in a position to lend money right now. I hope you understand."

"We're doing holidays differently this year."

"We're creating our own holiday traditions this year. We'll see you [when], but we won't be doing [old tradition]."

"That topic is off-limits."

"We're not comfortable discussing [topic]. Let's talk about something else."



PART 2: SPECIFIC RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

In-Laws and Parents

COMMON CHALLENGES:

Overinvolvement:

- Too much advice
- Intrusive questions
- Boundary violations
- Trying to control

Criticism:

- Of your partner
- Of your choices
- Of your relationship
- Comparison to siblings

Favoritism:

- Treating one partner better
- Comparing to siblings
- Unequal treatment

Competing for time:

- Expecting all holidays
- Frequent visits
- Guilt about time spent

STRATEGIES:

United front:

- Present as team
- Support each other
- Don't let them divide you
- Handle your own family

Each person handles their own family:

- You address issues with your family
- Partner addresses issues with theirs
- Support each other
- Don't make partner be the bad guy

**Set clear expectations:**

- How often you'll visit
- Holiday plans
- Communication frequency
- Boundaries

Don't engage in criticism:

- "I understand you see it differently"
- "We're happy with our decision"
- Change the subject
- End conversation if needed

Limit information:

- Don't share everything
- Keep some things private
- Use discretion
- "We're handling it"

SPECIFIC SCENARIOS:**Unsolicited advice:**

"Thank you for your input. We'll consider it."

(Then do what you want)

Criticism of partner:

"I need you to speak respectfully about [partner]. They're my person and I won't tolerate criticism of them."

Intrusive questions:

"That's personal."

"We're not ready to discuss that."

"We'll let you know when there's news."

Unannounced visits:

"We need you to call first. This isn't a good time."

(Don't let them in if they violate boundary)

Holiday pressure:

"We're doing holidays differently this year. We'll see you [when]."

Guilt trips:

"I understand you're disappointed, but this is what works for us."

(Don't engage with guilt)



Siblings

COMMON CHALLENGES:

Competition:

- Who's more successful
- Who's the favorite
- Comparison

Different values:

- Lifestyle differences
- Political/religious differences
- Parenting differences (if applicable)

Drama:

- Family conflict
- Being put in middle
- Taking sides

Boundary issues:

- Oversharing
- Borrowing money
- Expecting free labor

STRATEGIES:

Stay out of family drama:

- "That's between you and [person]"
- Don't take sides
- Don't be messenger
- Set boundary about being involved

Accept differences:

- You don't have to agree
- Respect different choices
- Don't try to change them
- Focus on what you have in common

Set boundaries:

- About money
- About time
- About involvement in your life
- About respect for your partner

Maintain relationship without drama:

- Keep it light



- Avoid hot topics
- Enjoy what you can
- Accept limitations

Friends

COMMON CHALLENGES:

Jealousy:

- Feeling left out
- Resentment of partner
- Competing for time

Different life stages:

- Single vs. coupled
- Kids vs. no kids
- Different priorities

Inappropriate behavior:

- Disrespect of partner
- Crossing boundaries
- Bad influence
- Loyalty conflicts

Time management:

- Balancing couple time and friend time
- Partner feeling neglected
- Friends feeling neglected

STRATEGIES:

Balance:

- Maintain friendships
- Prioritize partner
- Include partner sometimes
- Have individual friend time too

Set boundaries:

- Respectful treatment of partner
- Appropriate behavior
- Time limits
- Topics off-limits

Communicate with partner:

- Discuss friend time needs



- Address concerns
- Find balance together
- Support each other's friendships

Choose wisely:

- Invest in healthy friendships
- Distance from toxic friends
- Surround yourselves with support
- Friends who support your relationship

SPECIFIC SCENARIOS:

Friend disrespects partner:

"I need you to speak respectfully about [partner]. If you can't, I can't continue this friendship."

Friend wants too much time:

"I love spending time with you, but I also need time with [partner]. Let's plan [frequency] and make it quality time."

Friend is bad influence:

"I'm in a different place now. I'm not comfortable with [behavior]."

Partner uncomfortable with friend:

Listen to partner's concerns

Evaluate friendship honestly

Set boundaries or distance as needed

Partner's comfort matters

Extended Family Events

COMMON CHALLENGES:

Competing events:

- Both families want you
- Can't be two places at once
- Guilt and pressure

Uncomfortable dynamics:

- Family drama
- Toxic relatives
- Awkward situations
- Partner feeling excluded

Different expectations:

- How long to stay



- What to bring
- Level of participation
- Frequency of attendance

STRATEGIES:

Plan ahead:

- Discuss before holidays
- Make decisions together
- Communicate plans early
- Stand firm

Alternate or split:

- Alternate holidays
- Split time (if possible)
- Create your own celebration
- Video call with family you can't see

Set time limits:

- "We can stay for 2 hours"
- "We need to leave by 5pm"
- Have exit strategy
- Stick to it

Support each other:

- Check in during event
- Have code word for "I need to leave"
- Present united front
- Debrief afterward

Create your own traditions:

- Celebrate on different day
- Host your own gathering
- Do holidays your way
- Don't feel obligated to attend everything

SCRIPTS:

Can't attend both families:

"We're alternating holidays this year. We'll be with [family] for [holiday]. We'd love to see you [alternative time]."

Need to leave early:

"We can stay until [time], then we need to go. We have another commitment."

Declining invitation:



"We appreciate the invitation, but we won't be able to make it. We hope you have a great time."

Creating your own tradition:

"We're starting our own tradition this year. We'll celebrate [holiday] at home, but we'd love to see you [other time]."



PART 3: UNITED FRONT

Why United Front Matters

WHEN YOU'RE NOT UNITED:

- Family can divide you
- Partner feels unsupported
- Boundaries get violated
- Resentment builds
- Relationship suffers

WHEN YOU'RE UNITED:

- Boundaries are respected
- Partner feels supported
- You're stronger together
- Family respects your partnership
- Relationship thrives

How to Present United Front

BEFORE INTERACTIONS:

Discuss:

- What boundaries do we need?
- What topics might come up?
- How will we handle challenges?
- What's our plan?
- How will we support each other?

Agree on:

- Decisions you've made
- Boundaries you're setting
- How you'll communicate them
- What you will/won't share

DURING INTERACTIONS:

Support each other:

- Back up your partner
- Don't contradict them
- Agree publicly (discuss privately later if needed)



- Show you're a team

Use "we" language:

- "We decided..."
- "We're planning..."
- "We need..."
- "Our boundary is..."

Redirect to partner:

- "Let me check with [partner]"
- "We'll discuss and let you know"
- "That's something we decide together"

Intervene if needed:

- If family is disrespectful to partner
- If boundary is being violated
- If partner is uncomfortable
- Stand up for them

Have exit strategy:

- Code word for "I need to leave"
- Planned reason to leave
- Support each other's need to exit
- Leave together

AFTER INTERACTIONS:

Debrief:

- How did that go?
- How are you feeling?
- What worked?
- What needs adjustment?
- Support each other

Address issues:

- If boundary was violated
- If someone was disrespectful
- If something needs follow-up
- Plan together

Appreciate each other:

- Thank partner for support
- Acknowledge difficulty
- Celebrate wins
- Reconnect



When You Disagree

WHAT IF YOU DON'T AGREE ON BOUNDARY OR APPROACH?

Discuss privately:

- Not in front of family
- Find compromise
- Understand each other's perspective
- Find solution together

Prioritize relationship:

- Partner's comfort matters most
- Err on side of stricter boundary
- Support partner even if you don't fully agree
- Work it out together

Present united front anyway:

- Even if you disagree
- Discuss privately later
- Don't let family see division
- Be a team

Formula:

"We need to discuss this privately. We'll get back to you."



PART 4: DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Preparing for Difficult Conversations

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION:

Clarify:

- What needs to be said
- What outcome you want
- What boundary you're setting
- How you'll communicate it

Plan together:

- What you'll say
- Who will say it
- How you'll handle pushback
- How you'll support each other

Choose timing:

- Private setting
- When calm
- Not during event or holiday
- When you can have full conversation

Prepare emotionally:

- Expect pushback
- Stay calm
- Remember your why
- Support each other

Having the Conversation

THE CONVERSATION:

Be direct:

- State the issue clearly
- Don't hint or beat around bush
- Be specific
- Be kind but firm

Use "I/We" statements:

- "We need..."
- "We've decided..."



- "I feel... when..."
- Not "You always..."

Set the boundary:

- Clear and specific
- What you need
- What will happen if violated
- Non-negotiable

Stay calm:

- Don't get defensive
- Don't engage in argument
- Repeat boundary if needed
- End conversation if necessary

Don't over-explain:

- Brief explanation
- Don't justify excessively
- Don't apologize for boundary
- You don't need permission

SAMPLE CONVERSATION:

"Mom, we need to talk about something important. We love you and we want a good relationship with you, but we need you to call before coming over. We value our privacy and need advance notice for visits. We understand this might be an adjustment, but this boundary is important to us. Can we count on you to respect this?"

Handling Pushback

COMMON PUSHBACK:

"You're being too sensitive"

→ "This is what we need. We'd appreciate your support."

"But I'm your mother/father"

→ "I love you, and I also need this boundary."

"You never had a problem with this before"

→ "Things have changed. This is what we need now."

"You're choosing them over me"

→ "I'm not choosing. I'm setting a healthy boundary for our relationship."

"But family is supposed to..."

→ "We have a different view of what healthy family looks like."



Guilt trips

→ "I understand you're disappointed, but this is what we need."

Anger or threats

→ "I can see you're upset. Let's talk when you're calmer." (End conversation)

Ignoring the boundary

→ Enforce consequence. "We asked you to [boundary]. Since you didn't, [consequence]."

When to End the Conversation

END IF:

- They're yelling or abusive
- They won't respect boundary
- Conversation is going in circles
- You're getting too emotional
- They're manipulating

HOW TO END:

"I can see we're not going to agree on this right now. We need to end this conversation. We can talk again when everyone is calmer."

Then leave or hang up.



PART 5: SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Toxic Family Members

SIGNS OF TOXICITY:

- Abusive (emotionally, verbally, physically)
- Manipulative
- Disrespectful of boundaries repeatedly
- Harmful to your relationship
- Refuse to change
- Create constant drama

YOUR OPTIONS:

Low contact:

- Minimal interaction
- Strict boundaries
- Limited information
- Surface-level only

No contact:

- Cut off completely
- Block communication
- Don't attend events they're at
- Protect yourself and relationship

Conditional contact:

- Only if they respect boundaries
- Only in certain settings
- Only for limited time
- With clear consequences

MAKING THE DECISION:

Consider:

- Is this relationship harmful?
- Have you tried boundaries?
- Are they willing to change?
- What's the cost of maintaining relationship?
- What does your partner need?
- What do you need?



Discuss with partner:

- What do we need?
- What are we willing to tolerate?
- What's best for our relationship?
- How will we handle this?

You don't owe anyone a relationship, even family.

Blending Families

WHEN YOU EACH HAVE CHILDREN:

Challenges:

- Different parenting styles
- Loyalty conflicts
- Boundary issues
- Ex-partner involvement
- Kids' adjustment

Strategies:

- United front on parenting
- Respect each other's relationship with kids
- Set boundaries with exes
- Create new family traditions
- Be patient with blending process
- Consider family therapy

WHEN FAMILIES DON'T GET ALONG:

If your families don't like each other:

- Keep them separate
- Don't force interaction
- Alternate events
- Create your own celebrations
- Don't put yourself in middle
- Protect your relationship



Financial Entanglement

COMMON ISSUES:

- Lending money
- Co-signing loans
- Shared property
- Expectations of support
- Inheritance conflicts

STRATEGIES:

Set financial boundaries:

- What you will/won't do
- Clear limits
- Discuss with partner first
- Present united front

Don't lend money you can't afford to lose:

- If you lend, consider it a gift
- Don't expect repayment
- Don't let it create resentment

Separate your finances:

- From family
- Make your own decisions
- Financial independence
- "We're not in a position to help"

Get legal help if needed:

- For complex situations
- Property issues
- Inheritance
- Protect yourselves

Cultural and Religious Differences

WHEN YOU COME FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS:

Challenges:

- Different expectations
- Different traditions
- Different values
- Family pressure



- Identity conflicts

Strategies:

- Honor both backgrounds
- Create hybrid traditions
- Set boundaries with families
- Find common ground
- Educate families about each other
- Stand firm in your choices
- Consider cultural/religious counseling



PART 6: DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

When to Set a Boundary

SET A BOUNDARY WHEN:

- ☐ Your relationship is being harmed
- ☐ You feel disrespected or violated
- ☐ Your partner is uncomfortable
- ☐ You're being taken advantage of
- ☐ You're feeling resentful
- ☐ Something is unsustainable
- ☐ Your needs aren't being met
- ☐ You need to protect your relationship

Trust your gut. If something feels wrong, it probably is.

The Decision Matrix

FOR EACH SITUATION, ASK:

1. Is this harming our relationship?

- ☐ Yes → Address it
- ☐ No → May not need boundary

2. Have we tried to address it?

- ☐ Yes, no change → Stricter boundary
- ☐ No → Start with conversation

3. What do we both need?

Partner 1: _____

Partner 2: _____

4. What's the boundary?

5. How will we communicate it?

6. What if it's violated?

7. Are we both on board?

- ☐ Yes → Proceed
- ☐ No → Discuss more

Evaluating Relationships



PART 7: YOUR ACTION PLAN

Current Challenges

FAMILY/FRIEND ISSUES WE'RE FACING:

Issue 1: _____

Who's involved:

What's the problem:

What we need:

Boundary we'll set:

How we'll communicate it:

Issue 2: _____

Who's involved:

What's the problem:



What we need:

Boundary we'll set:

How we'll communicate it:

Issue 3: _____

Who's involved:

What's the problem:

What we need:

Boundary we'll set:

How we'll communicate it:



Boundaries We're Setting

OUR BOUNDARIES:

With parents/in-laws:

With siblings:

With friends:

With extended family:

Around holidays/events:

Financial boundaries:

Communication boundaries:



Our United Front Agreement

WE AGREE TO:

- ☐ Put our relationship first
- ☐ Present united front
- ☐ Support each other
- ☐ Set and maintain boundaries together
- ☐ Handle our own families
- ☐ Communicate before making decisions
- ☐ Protect our relationship
- ☐ Not let family divide us
- ☐ Address issues together
- ☐ Prioritize our partnership

How we'll support each other:

How we'll handle disagreements:

Our commitment:

Partner 1 signature: _____

Partner 2 signature: _____

Date: _____



☐ _____

☐ _____

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FINAL REMINDERS

Your Relationship Comes First

REMEMBER:

- Your partner is your primary family
- Protecting your relationship is not selfish
- Boundaries are healthy
- You're building your own family
- You get to decide what works for you

Don't sacrifice your relationship to keep peace with family.

Boundaries Are Love

BOUNDARIES:

- Protect relationships
- Create respect
- Allow for healthy connection
- Are necessary for sustainability
- Show you value yourself and your relationship

Boundaries aren't mean. They're healthy.

You Can't Control Others

YOU CAN CONTROL:

- Your boundaries
- Your responses
- Your choices
- Who you spend time with
- How you protect your relationship

YOU CAN'T CONTROL:

- Others' reactions
- Others' choices
- Others' feelings
- Whether they respect boundaries

Focus on what you can control.



It Gets Easier

SETTING BOUNDARIES IS HARD AT FIRST:

- People will push back
- You'll feel guilty
- It will be uncomfortable
- You'll doubt yourself

BUT:

- It gets easier with practice
- Boundaries become clearer
- People adjust (or you adjust your relationship with them)
- Your relationship gets stronger
- You feel more empowered

Keep going. It's worth it.

You're Not Alone

MANY COUPLES STRUGGLE WITH THIS:

- In-law issues
- Family boundary problems
- Friend conflicts
- Balancing relationships

**You're not bad people for setting boundaries.
You're building a healthy relationship.**

NEXT STEPS

AFTER COMPLETING THIS RESOURCE:

- ☐ Identify current challenges
- ☐ Discuss with partner
- ☐ Agree on boundaries
- ☐ Plan difficult conversations
- ☐ Communicate boundaries
- ☐ Enforce consistently
- ☐ Support each other
- ☐ Seek coaching/therapy if needed
- ☐ Celebrate your united front



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

RELATED HVL CONNECT RESOURCES:

- Resource 3.1: Weekly Relationship Check-In Template
- Resource 3.3: Creating Shared Rituals and Traditions
- Resource 1.2: Boundary Setting and Self-Care Guide

RECOMMENDED READING:

- "Boundaries" by Henry Cloud and John Townsend
- "Set Boundaries, Find Peace" by Nedra Glover Tawwab
- "The Dance of Anger" by Harriet Lerner
- "Toxic In-Laws" by Susan Forward

ABOUT HVL CONNECT

Dante Yigael, Certified Life & Relationship Coach

Specializations:

- Couples Coaching
- Boundary Setting
- Family Dynamics
- Relationship Protection

Approach:

- Evidence-based and practical
- Supportive of your relationship
- Culturally sensitive
- Focused on healthy boundaries

Contact:

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Your relationship is worth protecting.

Set boundaries. Stand together. Build the life you want.