

How to react when you partner crosses boundaries

Note: It is common and most of the time it is unintentional, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't let them know.

Processive escalation of communication

1. Signal nonverbal desire to adjust connection (open up and pull back)
2. Undeniably clear non-verbal signal (leading yourself out of close embrace)
3. Undeniably clear verbal message (examples bellow)

Addressing intention mis-alignment

- I don't feel listened to. Can you try to match my energy?
- This dance is making me feel uncomfortable. Can you try to reciprocate my intentions?
- I'm sorry, I feel like we're not in the same mood so I'm not enjoying this dance much. I'd like to leave it there this time.
- Hey I'm not sure if we are in the same mental place. You give me the feeling that you're more interested in the intimacy than in the dancing.

Dance roles & initiatives to lead

- Would you like to follow/lead me for a dance?
- I'm noticing there's not much space for me to lead—can we find a balance?
- I enjoy it more if we share the initiative, can you lead me more?

Unwanted closeness

- When I shift my hands like that, it's to signal that I want to make more space between us.
- I feel like you're forcing me [to stay in close embrace].
- I feel like you're trying to pull me in close embrace. I'll take the initiative to come closer when I'm feeling it.

After a dance

- I enjoyed the dance but it made me feel a little uncomfortable at times.
- I didn't feel like you really listened to my boundaries when...
- I enjoy dancing with you, but can you try being more careful with your partner's boundaries?
- I didn't find gaps in the dance where I could express myself creatively.

Communicating a crossed boundary

- Your hand is too low/doesn't need to be there.
- That's too much for me/You're skipping steps/That's outside of my comfort zone with you.
- Please be more conscious about crossing boundaries.
- Don't surprise your partners with something like that. I'm not comfortable with it, and others might as well.

Follow up: if they argue/defend/deny...

- I don't need to convince you. I'm just sharing my boundary.
- [Ignoring their objection/retort] Maybe it was an accident, we can keep dancing. *or* That's alright. Maybe it's in my head.
- If you don't try to make this dance comfortable for both of us, I don't want to dance with you.
- If you want to become a better listener in dancing, the safer space team welcome questions about non-verbal cues for adjusting the connection.