



Your Basic Human Relationship Rights

Abuse begins with an escalating series of unacknowledged boundary violations.
-T. Ann DeCarlo

Every human being, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or marital status, has the following basic relationship rights:

- You have the right to have your needs and feelings be considered as important as anyone else's needs and feelings.
- You have the right to experience and express your feelings.
- You have the right to express your opinions.
- You have the right to set your own priorities.
- You have the right to establish independence.
- You have the right to decide how to spend your time.
- You have the right to choose your own lifestyle.
- You have the right to change your lifestyle, yourself, your behaviors, your values, your life situation, and your mind.
- You have the right to dress, wear your hair, and feed and maintain your body as you choose.
- You have the right to watch or listen to whatever you want.

- You have the right to choose your path in this world and the type of work you prefer.
- You have the right to make honest mistakes and to admit those mistakes without being humiliated.
- You have the right to self-fulfillment through your own talents and interests.
- You have the right to grow as a person and to accept new challenges.
- You have the right to choose with whom you spend your time and with whom you share your body.
- You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect in all your relationships.
- You have the right to be listened to respectfully.
- You have the right to ask for what you want assertively.
- You have the right to say “I don’t understand” or “I don’t know” without being humiliated.
- You have the right to say “No” and to set limits and boundaries without feeling guilty. (We each have the right to ask what we want of another person, and we each have the right to say no to another person’s request.)
- You have the right to set limits on how you will be treated in your relationships.
- You have the right to expect your boundaries to be respected.
- You have the right to walk away from toxic or abusive relationships.
- You have the right to pursue what makes you happy.
- You have the right to stand up for yourself and to demand that your rights be respected.

Healthy personal boundaries are based on this foundation of basic rights, and no organization, society, culture, or individual has the right to take any of them from you.

Good relationships are based on trust, integrity, mutual respect, and honoring these basic rights to which all human beings are entitled. Unfortunately, in our patriarchal society the majority of men consciously or unconsciously feel entitled to ignore these boundaries to one degree or another when it comes to women. This long-

standing norm has become so deeply ingrained in our culture that it frequently goes unnoticed and has been unwittingly supported by both genders. As long as male entitlement and domination rule, abuse of women will continue.

Exposing the Role of Male Entitlement in Abusive Relationships

The following list is adapted from an article titled "Let's End Relationship Entitlement Now," by Thomas G. Fiffer, MA, senior editor, ethics, at [The Good Men Project](#). It presents a five-point manifesto that illustrates the role of entitlement in abusive relationships.

- 1. Our relationship does not entitle you to have sex with me:** Not every night. Not every week. Not even once. Not ever. I may be your wife, husband, girlfriend, or boyfriend, but I don't have to put out. A relationship creates the opportunity for sex but does not guarantee it. Your needs are important, but they don't ever determine the outcome. If you're not getting enough, you can leave. *Sex is requested, negotiated, and agreed on, and my consent—expressed in words or with clear, non-verbal communication—is always required.* [To this excellent description I would add one more point: *I am not responsible for your orgasm!*]
- 2. Our relationship does not entitle you to treat me with disrespect:** There is nothing I can do to you that merits contempt or scorn. You may be upset with me, disappointed, even angry. And you have every right to express your feelings in a healthy, constructive way. But you have no right to insult, mock, demean, or dismiss me, or to treat me as anything but an equal. *I don't stick around where I'm not appreciated.*
- 3. Our relationship does not entitle you to use physical force against me.** You must never strike me, push me, restrain me, or interfere with my physical freedom. You must respect my body and my physical space at all times. No matter how angry you are—with me or anything else in your life—and no matter how much you may hurt inside, hurting me physically is never an option. If a stranger attacked me, I would call the police, and *our relationship will not prevent me from calling them on you.*
- 4. Our relationship does not entitle you to emotional manipulation:** It does not entitle you to use my fears and vulnerabilities to hurt me or to get your needs met. If I don't want to do something, I don't want to do it, and I get to choose not to do it. If you want to convince me otherwise, show me

the benefit for me. If you threaten pain for noncompliance, I will lose all respect for you, instantly. And I will pack my bags (if I live with you) and leave.

- 5. Our relationship does not entitle you to assume you're fine and leave your own issues, illnesses, and disorders untreated:** Just because I'm dating you, or married to you, I don't have to accept your hurtful behavior and destructive patterns as givens. You may have hidden these things during courtship or I may have ignored all your red flags. Either way, I don't have to be stuck tolerating stuff in our relationship just because we're in a relationship. Nothing is permanent, and if you take me or my love for you for granted, you'll soon find yourself alone.

These five situations illustrate how abusers can use a combination of entitlement, dominance, and privilege as a greenlight to treat their partners more like slaves than fellow humans with free agency.

By knowing our basic human rights and refusing to let anyone invade our personal space without our permission, we are caring for ourselves and teaching anyone who wishes to be part of our lives to respect us or move on. By taking this stand, we are deterring male entitlement and abuse from being passed down to future generations. We all benefit from learning to recognize and honor the line where we end and another begins.

In an abusive relationship there is no communication. However, in a healthy relationship both genders, once educated on this subject, can work together to support and respect each other.

The information contained in this document is from Chapter 19 of the book *No More Abuse: How to Leave Your Abuser, Reconnect With Yourself & Create a New Life*. Copyright © 2023 by T. Ann DeCarlo

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