

Legendary Love. Module 4. Your Space, My Space, Our Space. Lesson 22. Everyone Needs Space.

Everyone Needs Space

In the last module, you learned about areas of disagreement in relationships. In this module, we'll go in depth into the need for personal space and boundaries.

As you move through the lessons, keep in mind that everyone is different. Some people need more personal space than others, just as some people are more revealing about their thoughts and feelings than others.

Let's begin by looking at why personal boundaries are needed.

The Need for Personal Boundaries in Relationships

No matter how much you love each other, you're different. In this course, you've been introduced to the differences in how you handle communication, anger, and social interaction.

People who need less personal space and desire more connection often feel insecure with partners who are opposite of them.

If you need less personal space, and your partner needs more personal space, you might want to use a mantra such as, "My partner's need for personal space is about them, not about me."

A Personal Space Exercise

The amount of personal space needed by any individual may be different according to the emotional atmosphere at the time as well as the person involved.

Here's a simple exercise to discover the amount of personal space that you and your partner require:

1. **Determining your space.** Stand about 10 feet apart facing each other. The one going first walks slowly towards the other. The second person puts their hands up when the one walking is close enough. It's that simple. Then the next one does it.

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2. Repeat the exercise with each of you having an image of the last time you each felt:

- Angry with each other
- When sad
- When scared
- When happy
- When amorous

3. **Discuss your results.** Use the Reflective Listening process to discuss what happened.

The Why's of Personal Space Differences

People who need less personal space have a difficult time understanding why others need more personal space. Let's look at some research on the topic.

People with more anxiety and those known as highly sensitive need more personal space. People needing more personal space have an active parietal-frontal network, which is in the brain.

Consider these facts:

1. Their comfort level with others coming close to them is smaller than most people. This means they need more personal space.
2. Their sensitivity to stimulation (sounds, sights, emotional energy) is high. Sometimes they need to get out of the room and away from people completely.
3. This is about their needs, their comfort level, and not about their partner.

Introverts versus Extroverts

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Introverts need more personal space than extroverts. Introverts are more sensitive to the brain chemicals dopamine, which brings excitement, and acetylcholine, which brings calm.

See how these brain chemicals affect introverts and extroverts differently:

1. **Dopamine.** The more excitement, the more dopamine is produced.
 - For an introvert, a little dopamine goes a long way. **Too much dopamine means introverts grit their teeth and want to run.**
 - An extrovert needs much more dopamine than an introvert to feel the effects of it. **The more excitement, the more dopamine produced, the more extroverts can feel it.**
2. **Acetylcholine.** Quiet activities stimulate the production of the calming chemical, acetylcholine.
 - The more reading, thinking, and quiet an introvert has, the calmer they are.
 - **An extrovert barely notices the subtle calming effects of acetylcholine.** They feel the excitement of the dopamine rush and prefer it.

Managing a Relationship with Differing Personal Boundary Needs

Acknowledging that you each have different needs regarding personal space is the first step in preventing a challenge from escalating. Take time to discuss the need for personal boundaries using the communication skills you learned earlier.

Important topics for discussion:

1. **You may have different needs in the home.**
 - If you have space, each of you may need your own “cave.” This would be a space you decorate just for you. It doesn’t have to be a

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room. It can be a corner of a room.

- Develop a signal or sign letting your partner know you need alone time.
2. **You may have different needs for space when you're experiencing different emotions.**
- The exercise at the beginning of this lesson will give you an indication of how much space each person needs under different circumstances.
3. **Physical space needs are also about touching.** Some people want more touching when they're upset while others want less.
- People who reach out to others by touch when the other is upset may feel rejected when their partner doesn't want to be touched.
 - **Part of being an emotionally supportive partner is knowing when and when not to touch.** Realize that their needs for touch probably have nothing to do with you.
 - Use communication skills to address any difficult feelings which come up.
4. **Sexual intimacy also involves personal boundaries and personal space.**
- **Be very clear with each other about your expectations regarding monogamy.**
 - In the next lesson on sexuality and sensuality, we'll address this more in depth.

Summary

When you and your partner have differences in your needs for personal space, communication is crucial. You now know personal space issues involve different areas of the brain as well as different chemicals in the brain. Keep this in mind when challenges arise in this area.

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In the next lesson, you'll examine differing personal needs regarding outside friendships.

But before moving on, please answer the following questions to integrate what you've learned.

Reflection

Use the following scale to answer the questions:

- 1 - Not at all or rarely**
- 2 - Somewhat**
- 3 - About half the time**
- 4 - Often**
- 5 - Almost always**

1. My partner and I have different personal space needs. (Use the scale above.)

2. Jot down a few sentences about how this affects you.

3. Sometimes my partner wants to be separate from me and it hurts my feelings. (Use the scale above.)

4. When your feelings are hurt, does this remind you of anything in your childhood? If "yes," write about your feelings and how you can manage them.