

Hey Yo! Those ain't melons or that ain't no flashlight and get your hand out of my pants!

A Commentary on Boundaries

Burning Flipside is our own little social experiment where we come together to enjoy to gorgeous hill country and each other to the fullest. There are very few hard and fast rules in our community but two that need some elaboration are: respecting each other's personal boundaries and taking responsibility for your own experience. The interplay of these two rules forms a social contract that makes our event a safe place to explore your own boundaries while encouraging respect for each other.

One of the wonderful things about this group is the level of closeness and intimacy, physical and otherwise, that is so freely expressed. I think that most of us love it and enjoy it, and wouldn't trade this for the world. However, please keep in mind that there are no expectations in this vein and that different people have different comfort levels with physical intimacy, as with emotional intimacy. We must not only respect everyone's boundaries, but also ensure that every person is free to express their boundaries. Our community needs to be a place where anyone is comfortable in saying NO to any intimate request, which means there has to be a request to say NO to. You MIGHT be intuitive enough to pick up on subtle cues, but don't count on it...ASK when in doubt; and, in fact, don't assume you have no doubt and simply ask anyway! It is always wise to ask before laying hands on someone for the first time. Who knows? Those shoulders you want to "selflessly" massage may be sunburned. Don't think of checking in or needing to stay tuned to subtle cues as a kill-your-buzz obligation, think of it as a **gift**; such a connection can have its own rewards!

So what does all this mean in practical terms?

♣ When someone says NO, it means NO.

Everyone should feel free to say no at any time regardless of what has happened prior to that moment. There should be no cajoling, begging, pleading or other emotional blackmail after the utterance of NO. Who wants to be tagged as a "creep" (or worse)?

♣ I have a hard time saying "no."

YOU are responsible for your own experience. Perceived fear of "confrontation" or "not having someone like you" will only detract from a positive experience. This event is good place to push your boundaries by establishing your boundaries! YOU are in charge of those boundaries and how they get pushed or not. Respect for yourself will harvest respect from others and respectful people will respect you when you tell them no.

♣ **I said NO but that person will not leave me alone?**

When you are able, alert others to your situation, asking them to help monitor it. You might even try talking about the person where they can hear you. Try standing your ground and see if these steps will send the person on their way, or if not, try asking friends to accompany you and try to put some distance between you and the person in question.

♣ **I established my boundaries and walked away with friends, but now they are following me. What should I do?**

If possible, walk towards a heavily populated area such as the beach during the day or a dance floor at night. Engage yourself with as many people as it takes to create a “wall of protection” and alert them to your situation. If this doesn’t work, or you feel it will only stave them off temporarily, seek, or send someone to find, a ranger.

♣ **Someone just requested for my help about a ‘creepy’ person.
What should I do?**

If it is possible for you to help, do any or all of the following:

- ★ Actively listen to the requester and try to help as much as you feel capable – try not to cast doubt upon their perceptions. Try the “silent, but strong” approach – talking too much might lead to invalidating their feelings (“Oh, Pat? S/He’s harmless!” or “What did you do to encourage Pat?”) OR lead to amplifying their discomfort by over-validating their fears (chattering away by relaying rumors or your perceptions of “Pat”)
- ★ Enlist a friend to go find more support (more friends of the requester if possible) or a ranger, if steps taken with friends don’t prove fruitful.
- ★ Stay with the requester until they feel safe.

If it is not possible for you to help, try to help the requester to find another person to help.

Please be mindful of such requests to the best of your abilities. Assume that *you* are the “someone else” who can take care of the something that needs to be done—as in all aspects of a event founded on “participation.” There is no reason to be heroic in your efforts, just pay attention to the space around you, and own it. If all else fails, please help them find a ranger.

ABOVE ALL REMEMBER, FLIPSIDE IS A SEXY PARTY, NOT A SEX-PARTY