

Boundary Scripts

Ready-to-use words for saying no, asking for what you need, and holding your ground at work, with family, and in relationships.

A boundary is a clear statement of what you will and won't do. It isn't a demand that someone else change. You can't control how people react, but you can choose what you say and what you do next. Use these scripts as a starting point and make the words your own.

A simple four-part formula

1 Fact

Say what's happening, without blame.

"When meetings get booked over my lunch..."

2 Feeling

Use an "I" statement about the effect on you.

"...I end up rushed and drained."

3 Ask

Make one clear request or state your limit.

"Please check with me before booking 12 to 1."

4 Follow-through

Decide what you'll do if it keeps happening.

"If it's booked, I'll decline it."

Before you start

- **Start small.** Practise with lower-stakes situations before the hardest conversation.
- **Keep it short.** One or two sentences is enough. Long explanations invite debate.
- **Buy time if you need it.** "Let me think about it and get back to you" is a complete answer.
- **Expect some discomfort.** Guilt is common when you're new to boundaries. It isn't proof that you did something wrong.
- **Follow through.** A boundary you don't act on teaches people it's optional.

Your safety comes first. If speaking up could put you at risk of being hurt, threatened or controlled, a script isn't the right tool. Reach out to a professional or a support line first, and call 911 in an emergency.

Need help right now? If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department. Call or text 9-8-8 (Suicide Crisis Helpline, 24/7). Under 18? Call Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868.

This is an educational self-help tool. It is not a diagnosis, and it is not a substitute for care from a regulated health professional.

Where this comes from: The four-part structure draws on assertiveness training and the interpersonal effectiveness skills of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (Linehan, *DBT Skills Training Manual*, 2nd ed., 2015). The 20-minute break draws on Gottman's research on emotional flooding during couple conflict. Scripts are original to Clover Counselling.

At work

WHEN YOUR PLATE IS ALREADY FULL

"I want to do this well, and I can't take it on this week without something else slipping. Which of these should I move?"

AFTER-HOURS MESSAGES

"I'm offline after 6 p.m. I'll get back to you first thing tomorrow."

BEING PUT ON THE SPOT

"Let me check my calendar and get back to you by 3."

SAYING NO TO SOMETHING OPTIONAL

"Thanks for thinking of me. I'm going to pass this time."

BEING TALKED OVER

"I'd like to finish my point, and then I'm glad to hear yours."

CREDIT FOR YOUR WORK

"I noticed my analysis was shared without my name on it. Going forward, I'd like to be credited when my work is presented."

With family

UNASKED-FOR ADVICE ABOUT YOUR CHOICES

"I know this comes from caring about me. I've made my decision, and I'm not going to discuss it today."

COMMENTS ABOUT YOUR BODY OR EATING

"Please don't comment on my body or what I eat. Let's talk about something else."

VISITS AND HOLIDAYS

"We'd love to come for dinner. We'll be heading home around 8."

CULTURAL OR GENERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

"I know how much this matters to you. I'm making a different choice, and I still love you."

REQUESTS FOR MONEY

"I'm not able to lend money right now. I'm happy to help you look at other options."

BEING CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

"I care about you both, and I'm not going to pass messages between you. Please talk to them directly."

In relationships and friendships

WHEN A FIGHT IS GETTING HEATED

"I'm too worked up to listen well. I need 20 minutes to calm down, and then I want to come back to this."

Take at least 20 minutes, do something calming, and come back.

RAISED VOICES OR NAME-CALLING

"I want to keep talking, but not like this. If the yelling continues, I'm going to step away and we can try again later."

PRIVACY AND YOUR PHONE

"I'm not comfortable sharing my passwords. I'm happy to talk about what's making you feel unsure."

WHEN YOU'RE OUT OF ENERGY TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

"I care about you, and I don't have it in me to really listen tonight. Can we talk tomorrow after work?"

If they push back

Stay calm and repeat yourself. You don't need a new reason each time.

"I hear you. My answer is still no."

"I understand you're disappointed. It's still my decision."

"I'm not going to argue about this. Let's pick it up later."

"I'd rather be honest with you than say yes and resent it."

Write your own

Fact: when... _____

Feeling: I feel... _____

Ask: I'd like / I won't... _____

Follow-through: if it happens again, I will... _____

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