



## Boundary Scripts That Actually Work

An explainer and ready-to-use phrases in English, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu · Created by Simar Gill Lowther, MACP, RP (CRPO)

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### At a glance

- A boundary is a clear statement of what you will and won't do, not a rule for someone else.
- Healthy boundaries protect relationships by preventing resentment and burnout.
- Having words ready, in the language you need, makes boundaries much easier to say.

### What boundaries are, and aren't

| A boundary is...                                         | A boundary is not...                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| About your own actions: "I'll leave if there's yelling." | Controlling others: "You can't yell." |
| Said calmly and clearly                                  | An ultimatum said in anger            |
| A way to protect a relationship                          | A punishment or rejection             |
| Flexible when it makes sense                             | A wall that shuts everyone out        |

### Why boundaries feel so hard

Many people worry that saying no will make them seem selfish, ungrateful, or disrespectful. This can be especially strong in families and cultures where duty, respect for elders, and putting others first are deeply valued. Those values are meaningful. Boundaries don't have to reject them. You can honour family and also protect your wellbeing.

Guilt after setting a boundary is normal. It usually means you're doing something new, not something wrong.

### The anatomy of a clear boundary

1. **Acknowledge:** *"I know this matters to you..."*
2. **State the boundary:** *"...and I'm not able to host this year."*
3. **Offer an alternative (optional):** *"I'd love to bring dessert instead."*

4. **Hold it kindly:** If pushed, calmly repeat it. You don't need to over-explain.

#### **What the research says**

A systematic review found that assertive communication is linked with better wellbeing, and that assertiveness skills can be learned and improved through training (Speed, Goldstein & Goldfried, 2018).

Interpersonal effectiveness skills in DBT, including saying no and asking for what you need, are an evidence-based part of treatment (Linehan, 2015).

## Tool: Boundary Scripts in Four Languages

Choose the phrases that fit your situation and the language that will be heard best.  
Practise saying them aloud.

| English                                            | हिन्दी (Hindi)                                                           | ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)                                                      | اردو (Urdu)                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I can't do that right now.                         | मैं अभी यह नहीं कर सकता/सकती।                                            | ਮੈਂ ਹੁਣੇ ਇਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ/ਸਕਦੀ।                                        | میں ابھی یہ نہیں کر سکتا/سکتی۔                                            |
| I need some time to think about it.                | मुझे इस बारे में सोचने के लिए थोड़ा समय चाहिए।                           | ਮੈਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਸੋਚਣ ਲਈ ਥੋੜ੍ਹਾ ਸਮਾਂ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।                          | مجھے اس کے بارے میں سوچنے کے لیے تھوڑا وقت چاہیے۔                         |
| That doesn't work for me.                          | यह मेरे लिए ठीक नहीं है।                                                 | ਇਹ ਮੇਰੇ ਲਈ ਠੀਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ।                                               | یہ میرے لیے ٹھیک نہیں ہے۔                                                 |
| I love you, and I'm not able to say yes this time. | मैं आपसे प्यार करता/करती हूँ, लेकिन इस बार मैं हाँ नहीं कह सकता/सकती।    | ਮੈਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਪਿਆਰ ਕਰਦਾ/ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ, ਪਰ ਇਸ ਵਾਰ ਮੈਂ ਹਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਹਿ ਸਕਦਾ/ਸਕਦੀ। | میں آپ سے پیار کرتا/کرتی ہوں، لیکن اس بار میں ہاں نہیں کہہ سکتا/سکتی۔     |
| Please don't speak to me that way.                 | कृपया मुझसे इस तरह बात न करें।                                           | ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਗੱਲ ਨਾ ਕਰੋ।                             | براہ کرم مجھ سے اس طرح بات نہ کریں۔                                       |
| Let's talk about this when we're both calm.        | जब हम दोनों शांत हों, तब इस पर बात करते हैं।                             | ਜਦੋਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਸ਼ਾਂਤ ਹੋਈਏ, ਉਦੋਂ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ।                  | جب ہم دونوں پرسکون ہوں، تب اس پر بات کریں گے۔                             |
| I respect your opinion, and I've made my decision. | मैं आपकी राय का सम्मान करता/करती हूँ, लेकिन मैंने अपना फैसला कर लिया है। | ਮੈਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਰਾਏ ਦਾ ਸਤਿਕਾਰ ਕਰਦਾ/ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ, ਪਰ ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣਾ ਫ਼ੈਸਲਾ ਕਰ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ। | میں آپ کی رائے کا احترام کرتا/کرتی ہوں، لیکن میں نے اپنا فیصلہ کر لیا ہے۔ |
| I need some quiet time for myself.                 | मुझे अपने लिए थोड़ा शांत समय चाहिए।                                      | ਮੈਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਲਈ ਥੋੜ੍ਹਾ ਸ਼ਾਂਤ ਸਮਾਂ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।                            | مجھے اپنے لیے تھوڑا پرسکون وقت چاہیے۔                                     |

### My boundary plan

The situation where I need a boundary:

What I want to say (in my words, in any language):

How I expect they might respond:

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How I will hold my boundary if they push back:

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### Strategies to try

- **Start small.** Practise with low-stakes situations before bigger ones.
- **Keep it short.** Long explanations invite debate. One or two sentences is enough.
- **Use a calm tone.** Boundaries said calmly are easier to hear.
- **Expect pushback.** People may test a new boundary. Consistency is what makes it stick.
- **Take care of yourself afterward.** Guilt or anxiety may follow. Be kind to yourself.

### Strategies you may not have heard of

These less common, evidence-informed techniques go beyond the usual advice. Try one at a time and notice what works for you.

- **Never say yes on the spot.** Make a personal rule: "Let me check and get back to you." It gives you space to decide what you truly want.
- **Pre-decide your defaults.** Decide in advance how you'll respond to common requests, like hosting or lending money, so you're not deciding under pressure.
- **Rehearse with voice notes.** Record yourself saying a boundary, in the language you'll use, and play it back. Practise until it sounds steady.
- **Use "and" instead of "but."** "I love you, and I can't this weekend" sounds warmer than "I love you, but..."

### Journal prompts

Take your time with these. Write freely; there are no right answers.

Where in my life do I most need a boundary right now?

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What messages did I receive growing up about saying no?

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What am I afraid will happen if I set this boundary?

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How would my life feel if I protected my time and energy more?

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### When to reach out for support

If boundaries feel impossible, you often feel guilty or resentful, or relationships feel controlling or unsafe, therapy can help. At Insightful Journey Inc., we understand family and cultural expectations, and offer therapy in English, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu.

Insightful Journey Inc. offers therapy in person in Oshawa and virtually across Ontario, in English, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. Direct billing available.

[Book a free consultation](#) · 647-982-2527 (call, text, or WhatsApp)

*In crisis? Call or text 9-8-8, or call 911.*

*This resource is for education and self-reflection. It is not a diagnostic tool and is not a substitute for professional assessment or care.*

## References

Linehan, M. M. (2015). DBT skills training manual (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Speed, B. C., Goldstein, B. L., & Goldfried, M. R. (2018). Assertiveness training: A forgotten evidence-based treatment. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 25(1), e12216.

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