



## But What Do I Say?

### *A quick guide to setting boundaries clearly, kindly, and firmly*

Even when we know that we need and deserve to set boundaries in relationships, we don't always know how to do that. Effective boundary setting requires a range of social and emotional skills, including effective communication. This is especially complex when it is a close, personal relationship and we want to set boundaries without offending the other person or damaging the relationship.

Included below are four ways to set boundaries clearly, kindly, and firmly. No one option is better than the other but they can serve different purposes. With practice, experimentation and thoughtful reflection, you will be able to make a determination about which is right for you in each instance.

#### **Simple and Direct**

This approach sets a clear, firm boundary without explanation or a lot of detail.

##### *Could be good for use with:*

- Individuals that are likely to argue back or try to convince you to reconsider
- Individuals that may trigger you if the conversation goes on too long
- Situations in which you previously attempted a boundary but weren't firm
- Individuals with whom the relationship is not as sensitive or critical to preserve
- Co-workers or individuals with whom you do not want to share a lot of information

##### *Examples:*

I am not able to commit to that right now.

I will no longer be doing that.

I respect your decision but I need to do something different.

That does not work for me and I cannot participate.

#### **Direct with Detail**

This approach sets a clear, firm boundary and provides additional specific details.

##### *Could be good for use with:*

- Situations in which it's important for you to be very specific about what you will or will not do, are or are not comfortable with, because the other person may try to challenge you or may genuinely not understand without very concrete details
- Situations in which you want to offer an alternative to the behavior you will no longer engage in because of the boundary

##### *Examples:*

I choose not to participate in activities that involve \_\_\_\_\_.

I choose not to attend social gatherings where \_\_\_\_\_ will be present/happening.

I choose not to engage in conversations that involve \_\_\_\_\_.

That doesn't work for me. Instead I can \_\_\_\_\_.

## Positive Framing

This approach focuses on what works, as opposed to what doesn't work.

### *Could be good for use with:*

- Individuals who may be likely to interpret your boundaries as blame
- Situations in which you want to be absolutely clear that your boundaries are about you and not an attempt to regulate the other person's behavior
- Situations in which you want to model healthy self-awareness and self-advocacy

### *Examples:*

One thing I have learned about myself is that it works best for me to \_\_\_\_\_.

I am the happiest and healthiest in relationships when I \_\_\_\_\_, so as a result I will be \_\_\_\_\_.

I thrive in relationships that involve \_\_\_\_\_.

## Previewing the Consequence

This approach sets a clear, firm boundary and previews the consequence if the boundary is not honored.

### *Could be good for use with:*

- Individuals that are likely to argue back or try to convince you to reconsider
- Relationships in which you previously attempted to set a boundary but it was not respected
- Situations in which you are willing to implement the consequence if the boundary is not honored

### *Examples:*

Unfortunately, \_\_\_\_\_ does not work for me and I won't be able to continue in this relationship if \_\_\_\_\_ continues to happen.

Something I need in relationships is \_\_\_\_\_. If that is not possible in this relationship, I will have to \_\_\_\_\_.

You will notice that none of the examples include an explanation of why the boundary was chosen, which is because I do not believe we **owe** that to people when setting boundaries. You can certainly share that if you **choose** to, but I do not believe it is necessary.

For more information on how to set boundaries, visit [www.posa-coaching.com](http://www.posa-coaching.com) and set up a free discovery call or follow Posa on Instagram at @boundariesoverBS.

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