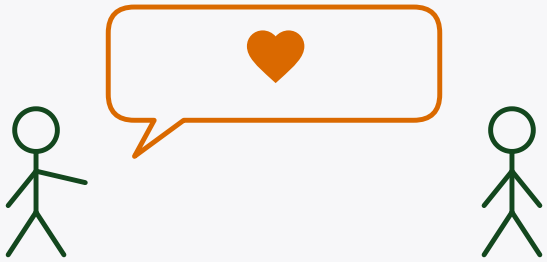
BOUNDARIES · COMMUNICATION

CLEAR IS KIND

Brené Brown's line sums it up: "Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind." Most boundary trouble isn't the limit you picked, it's that you said it so gently and vaguely the other person never heard it as a boundary. This is how to say it so they can take it in.



WHY VAGUE WORKS WORSE

Hinting, over-explaining, and hoping someone notices all feel gentler in the moment, and all of it hands the other person a blank space to fill with their own guess, usually the one that costs you the most. Softness that leaves them confused just postpones the conflict.

THE ANATOMY OF A CLEAR BOUNDARY

Say what the behavior is, say what you will do, and stop. It's simple: **"When ___ happens, I'm going to ___."** You don't owe an essay or ten reasons, and the reasons you do have are yours to keep.

WHAT "KIND" MEANS HERE

Kind means honest and respectful. It doesn't mean comfortable, and it doesn't mean they'll like it. You can be warm and clear in the same sentence.

TURN VAGUE INTO CLEAR

TIME

VAGUE I might not make it, we'll see.

CLEAR I can't come Sunday. I can do a call Tuesday.

EMOTIONAL

VAGUE It's fine, don't worry about it. (when it isn't)

CLEAR I'm upset about what happened, and I want to talk it through tonight.

IN-LAWS

VAGUE We'll try to swing by at some point.

CLEAR We can come Saturday for two hours. We won't stay for dinner this time.

PHONES

VAGUE I wish you were on your phone less.

CLEAR I'd like phones away while we eat. Can we both do that?

PARENTING

VAGUE Guys, come on, please stop.

CLEAR Screens go off at 7. If they're not off, I'll turn them off.

MONEY

VAGUE We should probably be careful with spending.

CLEAR I don't want to go over $200 on this. Let's plan around that.

KIND, NOT COLD

A clear boundary still respects the person. If it has a jab in it ("since you never listen anyway"), that's not clarity, that's contempt riding along. Strip the jab and keep the limit.

YOUR TURN

The vague version I usually say

The clear version

When ___ happens, I'm going to ___.

Where do you reach for vague because being clear feels unkind? Pick one boundary you've been softening, and write the clear version above. Built around Brené Brown's "Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind." (*Dare to Lead*, 2018). My Mental Climb is not affiliated with or endorsed by Brené Brown.