



## BOUNDARIES · COMMUNICATION

# CLEAR IS KIND

Brené Brown's line does the work here: "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

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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

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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

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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

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### 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

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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

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### The vague version I usually say

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### The clear version

When \_\_\_\_ happens, I'm going to \_\_\_\_.

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**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.