



BOUNDARIES · WHEN IT GETS TESTED

HOLDING THE LINE

Setting a boundary is the easy part. Holding it when someone pushes back, sulks, argues, or ignores it is the part most people fold on. This is for the moment right after.



PUSHBACK ISN'T PROOF YOU WERE WRONG

When a limit is new, especially with someone used to you not having one, the reaction often gets louder before it settles. If you give in at the loudest point, you teach that a bigger reaction is what works. Holding steady through that spike is usually the whole job.

A CONSEQUENCE PROTECTS YOU; A PUNISHMENT AIMS TO HURT

A consequence stays in your lane: **“If this keeps happening, I’m going to ____.”** Say it once, calmly, and follow through. Repeating it turns it into a threat, and threats invite negotiation.

WATCH THE RESCUE REFLEX

If you’re the dependable one, there’s a part of you that wants to save the other person from the discomfort of your boundary. Weakening the limit to soothe their reaction is that part doing its old job. You can care about their feelings and still let the boundary stand.



HOLD, RENEGOTIATE, OR WALK

Hold when the only thing that changed is that they're upset. Renegotiate when new information shows up, not just new pressure. Treat repeated violation as data about the relationship, not a cue to lower the bar again.

SCRIPTS, BY THE PUSHBACK YOU'RE GETTING

WHEN THEY GUILT-TRIP

"After everything I do for you" → "I hear that you're hurt, and the boundary still stands."

WHEN THEY GET ANGRY

"I'm not going to talk about this while we're yelling. We can come back to it when things are calmer."

WHEN THEY GO SILENT

"I'm not going to chase you to fix this. I'm here when you want to talk."

WHEN THEY SAY 'YOU'VE CHANGED'

"I have. I'm taking better care of myself, and that part's going to keep going."

WHEN THEY BARGAIN

"Just this once" → "Not this time. I know that's disappointing."

PLAN THE FOLLOW-THROUGH

Most people fold because they never decided the "when." Decide it now, before the moment.

The boundary

What I'll do if it's crossed

When and how I'll do it

Which boundary do you keep re-explaining instead of holding? Re-explaining is usually a sign the boundary is already clear, and the missing piece is follow-through. The escalation that gets louder before it settles is a known behavioral pattern called an extinction burst; holding steady through it is what lets it fade.

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