

Boundary scripts that *sound like an actual person.*

Use these as starting points, not lines you must perform perfectly. Change the wording until it sounds like you, then keep the action specific and within your control.

01

CONNECT

Name care or shared purpose when it is genuine - not as payment for having a limit.

02

LIMIT

Say what you need, what you will do, or what you are available for.

03

NEXT STEP

Name the realistic follow-through if the pattern continues.

The goal is not to prevent another person's feelings. The goal is to communicate clearly enough that you can act consistently.

Respect the relationship. *Protect the household.*

Be warm when warmth is honest, but do not hide the decision. Couples often need a united plan for visits, caregiving choices, and traditions as they form their own household.

1 Drop-ins

“We love that you want time with us. We are not doing unplanned visits. Please text first and wait for a yes. If we have not confirmed, we will not be able to open the door.”

Why it works: The request and follow-through are concrete; access is not decided by pressure at the doorstep.

2 Parenting choices

“We have decided to use [feeding / sleep / discipline choice]. You do not have to agree, but we need it followed when you care for our child. If it is not, visits will happen with one of us present.”

Why it works: The boundary allows disagreement while protecting the parents' decision and the child's care.

3 Traditions

“We are creating a holiday rhythm that fits our household. This year we will be home in the morning and visit from 2 to 5. We know that may be disappointing; the plan still stands.”

Why it works: It validates emotion without turning disappointment into decision-making authority.

They can disagree. *You can still decide.*

Not every opinion deserves a debate. These scripts protect decisions, body autonomy, emotional capacity, and parenting choices without requiring other people to approve first.

1

The closed topic

“I am not discussing that choice. You can disagree, and I am still going to make the decision that fits our household.”

Why it works: It ends the debate without demanding agreement.

2

Comments that cross a line

“Comments about my body, feeding, or parenting are not helpful. If they continue, I will step away from the conversation.”

Why it works: It identifies the behavior and the action you will take.

3

Unrequested advice

“Advice is welcome when I ask for it. Right now I need listening, encouragement, or practical help - not solutions.”

Why it works: It replaces mind-reading with a clear description of what support would help.

Protect recovery.

Make capacity visible.

Research on work-family boundaries and workplace telepressure suggests that detachment, control over off-hours, and clear transitions matter for recovery. These scripts make tradeoffs visible instead of quietly absorbing them.

1

Competing priorities

“I can complete A by Friday, or A and B by Tuesday. Which outcome should take priority?”

Why it works: It communicates capacity and asks the decision-maker to own the tradeoff.

2

After-hours contact

“I am offline after 5:30 and will respond the next workday. If something is truly urgent, please use [agreed emergency channel].”

Why it works: It distinguishes normal work from genuine urgency and protects recovery time.

3

Meetings past availability

“I can participate until 4:30. After that I have caregiving responsibilities. Please send the notes or action items, and I will review them the next morning.”

Why it works: It gives a firm end time and a cooperative next step.

Stay on the same team *without disappearing from it.*

The transition to parenthood can strain time, identity, intimacy, and division of labor. Clear requests, shared ownership, emotional responsiveness, and agreed household values can protect both the partnership and the people inside it.

1

Share the load - not the instructions

“I am at capacity. I need you to own bedtime on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday - including noticing what is needed, preparing it, and following through without me managing the steps. Can we agree to that and review it Sunday?”

Why it works: It asks for full ownership, not 'help' that still leaves one partner carrying the mental load.

2

Be vulnerable and stay connected

“I am not asking you to fix this. I need ten minutes to be heard and comforted. Are you available now, or can we choose a time tonight?”

Why it works: It names the kind of care needed while respecting the other person's current capacity.

3

Create your household values

“I know this is how we grew up. We can respect where it came from and still choose differently. Let us decide what we want our child to experience, then each of us will communicate that boundary to our own family.”

Why it works: It supports a united created-family plan without requiring either partner to reject their history.

Regulate. Repair. *Return to your values.*

Many people were taught to avoid conflict, overfunction, shut down, explode, or take responsibility for everyone else's feelings. A new boundary may feel wrong simply because it is unfamiliar.

Pause without abandoning

"I am too activated to talk well. I am taking 20 minutes and will return at 7:30. I am pausing the conversation, not leaving the issue."

Repair after over-explaining

"I gave a long explanation because I felt guilty. The shorter answer is: I am not available for that."

Repeat without escalating

"I hear that you are upset. My answer has not changed."

Reset after missing the boundary

"I said yes when I meant no. I need to correct that: I will not be able to do it."

Safety comes first. If setting a limit could increase intimidation, retaliation, stalking, financial control, or physical danger, do not rely on a script alone. Consider individualized safety planning with a qualified professional or domestic-violence advocate.

Research base: Feinberg et al. (2008, Family Foundations); McHale et al. (2022, culturally grounded prenatal coparenting); Bulger et al. (2007, work-personal boundary management); Barber et al. (2019, workplace telepressure); Paley & Hajal (2022, family coregulation). Educational tool; not individualized therapy, employment/legal advice, or a safety plan.