



The Boundary Script

Six ready-to-use phrases for the moments leadership tests your boundaries, so you don't have to find the words under pressure.

Why This Exists

Most boundary failures don't happen because you don't know your limits. They happen because, in the moment, you can't find the words fast enough, so you default to 'yes', or over-explain, or over-give.

It usually plays out the same way: someone asks for more than you have to give, or pushes back on something you've already decided, and you're left improvising under pressure. Improvising under pressure tends to favour whatever's easiest in the moment, usually compliance rather than whatever's actually right for you. Having the words ready in advance changes that.

This isn't about becoming rigid or difficult. It's about closing the gap between what you know you should say and what actually comes out when you're caught off guard, tired, or trying to keep the peace.

Keep this somewhere you'll actually see it. Practise the lines before you need them. The goal isn't to memorise a script word-for-word, it's to have a starting shape so you're never caught empty-handed.

The Six Scripts

1. When you're asked to take on more than you can hold

"I want to give this the attention it deserves, and I can't do that alongside everything else on my plate right now. Can we look at what moves, or who else could take this?"

2. When someone pushes back on a decision you've already made

"I hear that this isn't the outcome you wanted. The decision stands, and I'm glad to talk through the reasoning if that helps."

3. When you're asked to respond outside of working hours

"I'm not available for this tonight, I'll pick it up first thing tomorrow."

4. When you need to end a conversation that's going in circles

"I think we've covered the key points. Let's park it here and pick it up once we've both had time to think."

5. When you're asked to justify a boundary you've already stated

"I've thought this through, and I'm comfortable with where I've landed. I don't need to justify it further to hold it."

6. When you catch yourself about to over-explain or over-apologise

"No. It's a complete sentence, not an opening for negotiation."

Using This Well

A boundary held once and abandoned under pressure teaches people it was never really a boundary. Consistency matters more than perfection, a wobbly boundary held twice does more for you than a perfect one held once.

If a line feels stiff in your own voice, change the words but keep the shape: state the position, don't apologise for it, offer what you can (if anything), stop talking.

Expect some discomfort the first few times you use these, that's normal, not a sign you're doing it wrong. Boundaries often feel most awkward right before they start to feel automatic. The people worth keeping around will adjust to the new pattern; the ones who push back hardest are usually the ones who benefited most from you not having one.

None of this requires you to become someone harder or colder. Holding a boundary well is quiet, not combative. It's a short, calm statement, not a debate. The tone stays warm; it's the position underneath it that doesn't move.

Print this, save it to your phone, or copy the lines into wherever you keep your daily notes, whatever means you'll actually reach for it in the moment, rather than remembering it existed after the conversation's already over.

Lead with clarity. Influence with purpose. Expand your impact.

Want to go deeper? This is the starting point for the ['Foundations: Values & Boundaries'](#) work inside 1st Chair Energy™ courses. [Join the community](#) to hear of other ways to work with us.

READING LIST & SOCIAL ACCOUNT RECOMMENDATIONS*

1st Chair Foundations: Values & Boundaries

Suggested Reading List

Boundaries - Henry Cloud & John Townsend

The foundational text on why boundaries protect rather than isolate, and how to set them without guilt.

<https://link.amazon/BoccPltoq>

***Dare to Lead* - Brene Brown** Connects vulnerability and clear values to leadership courage under pressure.

<https://link.amazon/B04lgnehh>

***Atlas of the Heart* - Brene Brown**

A language-for-emotions guide, useful for naming what you're actually protecting when you set a boundary.

<https://link.amazon/B05nLJFJ1>

***Set Boundaries, Find Peace* - Nedra Glover Tawwab**

Practical, script-heavy guidance on setting and holding limits, a strong companion to the boundary work in this course.

<https://link.amazon/B06loeD2b>

***Self-Compassion* - Kristin Neff**

The research case for treating yourself with the same kindness you'd offer a good friend. Essential for anyone who finds it easier to set limits for others than for themselves.

<https://link.amazon/B06tlZdDh>

***Man's Search for Meaning* - Viktor Frankl**

A profound exploration of how knowing what we stand for sustains us through even the most difficult circumstances. Short, and unforgettable.

<https://link.amazon/B0amMe6Fx>

***Emotional Agility* - Susan David**

How to stop being hijacked by difficult thoughts and feelings, and make choices aligned with your values instead.

<https://link.amazon/B07qrTB4T>

***The Power of Meaning* - Emily Esfahani Smith**

A thoughtful case for building a life around meaning rather than happiness, directly relevant to values integration work.

<https://link.amazon/BoeUVmRQA>

***The Dance of Anger* - Harriet Lerner**

A classic on how to use anger as information rather than reaction, and what it reveals about unmet needs and unset boundaries.

<https://link.amazon/Boii588Qk>

***Mindset* - Carol Dweck**

The growth vs fixed mindset distinction, useful for understanding why self-compassion and learning matter more than self-criticism.

<https://link.amazon/B039AzzRj>

***Atomic Habits* - James Clear**

The clearest practical guide to building small, sustainable behaviours that honour your values day to day.

<https://link.amazon/B04CefkYv>

***Tiny Habits* - BJ Fogg**

The Stanford research behind making new behaviours stick, especially helpful for the integration stages of this course.

<https://link.amazon/B029BTkcb>

***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* - Stephen Covey**

Begin with the End in Mind remains one of the most powerful frameworks for values-led decision making in leadership.

<https://link.amazon/B030br8ii>

Social Account Recommendations

@nedratawwab Nedra Glover Tawwab

Boundaries specialist - therapist and author; scripts and templates in a style close to your own.

@brenebrown Brene Brown

Vulnerability, courage and values-led leadership research.

@susandavid_phd Dr Susan David

Emotional agility - Harvard Medical School psychologist, strong fit for values work under pressure.

@neffselfcompassion Dr Kristin Neff

Self-compassion research and practice, particularly relevant to the boundaries and inner critic sections of this course.

@jamesclear James Clear

Daily habit and values-aligned behaviour content, practical and evidence-informed.

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