BOUNDARY SCRIPTS CHEAT SHEET

Word-for-word scripts for the 7 hardest conversations with your adult child — so you're never caught off guard again.

by Christine Moriarty | RealMomLife.com

These scripts are not meant to be memorized word-for-word. They're anchors — clear, calm language to reach for when emotion takes over and you can't find your footing. Read them before a hard conversation, keep this page nearby, or use them after to process what happened. Adapt them to your voice. The goal is always to hold your ground with love.

SCENARIO 01

The Crisis Call — "I need you RIGHT NOW"

WHEN TO USE:

They call or text in full meltdown — demanding money, a place to stay, or immediate emotional rescue.

SAY THIS:

> ""I can hear you're really struggling right now. I love you and I'm not able to drop everything at this moment. Let's talk at [specific time] when I can give you my full attention.""
>
> ""I want to help you think through this, but I can't do that well right now. I'll call you at 7pm. Can you hold on until then?""

Tip: Name a specific time. "Later" or "soon" invites more pressure. A time closes the loop.

SCENARIO 02

The Guilt Trip — "You never support me"

WHEN TO USE:

They accuse you of not caring, not doing enough, or compare you unfavorably to other parents.

SAY THIS:

> ""I know it doesn't feel that way to you, and I'm not going to argue about my record. What I know is that I love you and I have limits.""
>
> ""I hear that you're frustrated with me. I'm not able to defend myself right now, but I'm also not going to accept that framing. I care about you deeply.""

Tip: Don't take the bait. Defending your record keeps you in the argument. Name your love and hold your ground.

SCENARIO 03

The Financial Ask — "I just need a little help"

WHEN TO USE:

They ask for money — urgently, with a story, or with the implication that you're their only option.

SAY THIS:

> ""I'm not in a position to give money right now. I love you and that's my answer.""

> ""I can help you think through your options, but I'm not able to be the financial solution here. What else have you considered?""

Tip: "No" is a complete sentence. You don't need to justify, explain, or apologize for it.

SCENARIO 04

The Threat — "Fine, then don't bother"

WHEN TO USE:

They threaten to cut contact, never speak to you again, or weaponize your grandchildren.

SAY THIS:

> ""I hope that's not what happens. I'm not changing my answer because of that, but I do hope we find our way back to each other.""

> ""That's your choice to make, and I can't control it. I'm going to keep the door open on my end. I love you.""

Tip: Giving in to threats teaches them that threats work. Hold steady with love — it's the only long-term path.

SCENARIO 05

The Blame Shift — "This is all your fault"

WHEN TO USE:

They blame their current problems — relationships, finances, mental health — on your parenting.

SAY THIS:

> ""I'm sure I made mistakes as a parent. I'm not going to take responsibility for where you are today. That's yours to own.""

> ""I hear that you're in pain and looking for somewhere to put it. I'm not the right target, and I'm not accepting that.""

Tip: Acknowledging you weren't perfect is NOT the same as accepting blame for their adult life.

SCENARIO 06

The Overstep — Showing up uninvited or crossing a stated boundary

WHEN TO USE:

They arrive without warning, contact your spouse/other children, or do something you explicitly said was off-limits.

SAY THIS:

> ""I'm not going to pretend this didn't happen. We talked about this boundary and you crossed it. I need some space before we talk again.""

> ""Coming here without calling isn't okay with me. I'm going to ask you to leave, and we can connect when we've agreed on a time.""

Tip: Address it in the moment calmly. Letting it go "this once" resets the boundary to zero.

SCENARIO 07

The Apology Demand — "You owe me an apology"

WHEN TO USE:

They demand you apologize for enforcing a boundary, saying no, or simply for something they've decided is your fault.

SAY THIS:

> ""I'm not going to apologize for that. I can hear that you're hurt, and I'm not changing my position.""

> ""If I've done something genuinely hurtful I'm open to hearing it. What specifically are you asking me to apologize for?""

Tip: Reflexive apologies — apologizing just to end conflict — teach others that pressure works. Mean it or don't say it.

5 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN IT GETS HARD

1. **Silence is not agreement.**
   You don't have to respond to every accusation. Staying quiet is a valid response.
2. **A boundary held once is a boundary.**
   You don't need their approval for it to count. You just need to hold it.
3. **Their reaction is not your responsibility.**
   If they're upset that you set a limit, that's information — not a reason to undo it.
4. **Love and limits can coexist.**
   You can love someone deeply and still refuse to be harmed by them.
5. **You are allowed to change.**
   Old patterns don't have to be permanent. Every conversation is a new chance to respond differently.

Want to go deeper?

This cheat sheet is a companion to Crisis-Proof Boundaries — the full workbook with six complete frameworks for holding limits even when it's hardest.

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