
EXTENDED FAMILY

Drawing the Line with Family

How to set boundaries with in-laws, parents, and extended family without destroying relationships.

Boundary Agreement Resource Library

Dr. Hines Inc. | boundaryagreement.com

This guide is a coaching resource, not therapy or counseling.

Leave and Cleave

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." **Genesis 2:24***

The most common family boundary issue is simple: one partner has not fully left their family of origin. They still defer to a parent's opinion over their spouse's. They still allow a parent to override household decisions. They still let family criticism of their partner go unchallenged.

This is not about cutting off family. It is about making clear that your marriage is the primary relationship.

Your spouse comes first.

If your mother criticizes your wife and you say nothing, you have just told your wife that your mother's opinion matters more than her feelings. Silence is a choice.

Holidays are negotiated, not defaulted.

You do not automatically go to one family's house every year. You decide together where you go and you communicate that decision together.

Financial boundaries with parents.

If a parent is providing financial support, they will feel entitled to input on your decisions. That is human nature. Financial independence from parents is a priority.

The in-law buffer rule.

Each person handles their own family. If your mother is overstepping, YOU address it. Not your spouse. Your spouse should never have to be the one setting boundaries with YOUR parents.

Visits have limits.

A week-long visit without boundaries is a recipe for conflict. Discuss visit length, sleeping arrangements, daily plans, and alone time BEFORE the visit.

EXERCISE: The Family Boundary Audit

Answer honestly. No defensiveness.

Has a family member criticized my partner? Did I address it? Y / N

Do I call or text a parent more than I talk to my spouse about decisions?

Has a parent given unsolicited parenting advice? How did I handle it?

Does my partner feel comfortable around my family? If not, why?

What boundary do I need to set with my family that I have been avoiding?

What is the hardest conversation I need to have? With whom?

IMPORTANT: If your family is toxic, manipulative, or abusive, boundary-setting may not be enough. In those cases, reduced or no contact may be necessary to protect your marriage and your children. That is not dishonoring your parents. That is protecting your family.