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The Sustainable Caring Decision Guide

A simple framework for deciding what the healthiest response is.

Start

Something feels off.
Do I feel resentment, dread, pressure, anxiety, or exhaustion?

No → Pause and stay aware. A boundary may not be needed right now.

Yes →

Am I being asked to give more time, energy, access, money, labor, or emotional support than I can sustainably offer?

No → Continue, but check in with yourself.

Yes →

Am I saying yes because I want to, or because I am afraid of disappointing someone?

I Want To → Check your capacity. If you have the energy, choose freely.

I Feel Afraid or Obligated →

Is this actually mine to carry, manage, solve, or fix?

Yes → Decide what portion is truly yours.

No →

Has this person repeatedly ignored my needs, crossed a line, or avoided responsibility?

No → Have a clear, direct conversation.

Yes →

Reduce access, increase distance, or change your availability. Privilege requires responsibility.

Continue

Have I already communicated what I need?

No → State the boundary clearly and simply.

Yes →

Do I have the energy to communicate what I need right now?

No → "No for 48." Take time before responding.

Yes →

What boundary would allow me to care for myself, without also feeling like I'm abandoning the other person?

Choose one:

- Say no
- Not now
- Do less
- Reduced access
- Greater distance
- No further participation
- A time limit
- A topic limit
- A behavior change

Final Check

Will saying yes create resentment?

Will saying no protect something important?

Am I acting from self-respect or fear?

Set the Boundary

"I can be a good person and still say no."

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