bluegrass recovery

GUIDE 05 WORKSHEET

Boundaries without ultimatums.

A boundary is what you will do, not what they must do. Examples for money, home and children, a step-by-step worksheet, and what to do when a boundary is tested.

Admissions, 24 hours a day
(502) 385-4424

421 Wabasso Ave
Louisville, KY 40209

THE DIFFERENCE

An ultimatum controls them. A boundary protects you.

Ultimatum

"If you use again, you are out." It depends on their behavior, and it only works if you are willing to carry it out, which most people are not.

Boundary

"I will not give you cash. I will pay for treatment directly." It depends on your behavior, so you can keep it every time.

Good boundaries are

- [ ] **About your actions**
  What you will or won't do.
- [ ] **Small enough to keep**
  Every single time, even when you're tired.
- [ ] **Said once, calmly**
  Not repeated as a threat in every argument.
- [ ] **Kind**
  Paired with what you will do to help.

EXAMPLES

What boundaries sound like.

Start with one. Choose the area that causes the most harm or stress right now.

AREA	A BOUNDARY YOU COULD SAY
Money	"I won't give cash. I will pay a bill directly or pay for treatment."
Home	"If you come home high, you'll sleep somewhere else tonight. We'll talk tomorrow."
The car	"I won't lend the car unless you've been sober that day."
Children	"I won't leave the kids with you when you've been drinking."
Covering for them	"I won't call your work to say you're sick."
Your time	"I'll talk about this, but not after 10 pm or while you're using."

WORKSHEET · PART 1

Choose your boundary.

1. What keeps happening that you want to change?

2. What will you do, or stop doing, when it happens?

3. Can you keep this every single time? If not, make it smaller.

4. What help will you offer alongside it?

WORKSHEET · PART 2

Say it once, calmly, and keep it.

5. Write the sentence you will say.

Try: “I love you, and I will not _____. What I will do is _____.”

6. When and where will you say it?

7. Who can support you in keeping it?

8. What will you do for yourself this week?

WHEN IT'S TESTED

When a boundary is tested.

It will be. Testing is normal and usually means the boundary matters.

1. **Expect pushback.**
   Anger, bargaining or guilt are common at first. They usually fade if you stay steady.
2. **Don't re-argue it.**
   "I've made my decision." Then do what you said.
3. **Follow through calmly.**
   No lecture is needed. The action is the message.
4. **Notice when it's respected.**
   And say so. "Thank you, that meant a lot."
5. **Review it together with support.**
   If a boundary isn't working, change it on purpose, not in the moment.

Safety comes first.

If you are ever afraid for your safety or a child's, leave and call 911. Boundaries are not a substitute for safety planning.

WHEN YOU ARE READY

Talk to someone who does this every day.

Bluegrass Recovery Center is a Joint Commission accredited outpatient program in Louisville, licensed by the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (AODE license #811092).

Call or text, any hour

(502) 385-4424. Admissions answers 24/7. If we miss you, we call back as soon as possible.

A free benefits check

We accept most major private insurance plans and explain what is covered before anyone decides anything.

Three levels of care

Partial hospitalization (PHP), intensive outpatient (IOP) and outpatient (OP), with the same team as you step down.

Help with what comes first

If detox is needed, admissions arranges it at a vetted partner. Bluegrass works with a partner organization that provides supportive housing.

In an emergency

Call 911. For a mental health or substance use crisis, call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

This guide is general information for families and is not medical, legal or financial advice. Updated October 2026.