

Boundaries: clear, respectful choices | Example

The Extra Shift: A Boundary Example

Adults and caregivers | 5 to 8 minutes | Handout

Follow a fictional person from an automatic yes to a realistic, limited offer.

This fictional example concerns Sam, who helps an older relative and also works part time. It is not a client story. Sam's relative can disagree without threatening or punishing Sam.

How to use this page

Read the sequence and notice the difference between caring, available capacity, and a specific offer. Your situation may require a different choice.

The familiar pattern

A relative asked Sam to take over another afternoon of errands. Sam almost agreed immediately, then noticed that doing so would cancel a needed appointment. Sam wanted to help but did not have the capacity for the whole request.

A pause and a clear answer

Sam said, "Let me check my week and get back to you tonight." After checking, Sam replied, "I cannot do Thursday afternoon. I can order the groceries on Wednesday, if that helps." The relative was disappointed. Sam acknowledged that feeling without offering the unavailable afternoon.

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What stayed difficult

The remaining errands still needed a solution. Sam asked whether they could review other supports together next week. That did not remove every pressure. The useful change was making an honest offer and protecting an existing commitment. Sam planned to review whether the smaller offer was sustainable rather than making it permanent automatically.

1. What was within Sam's control, and what remained outside it?**Facilitator notes and adaptation**

Caregiving choices are affected by real service shortages and obligations. A short script alone cannot resolve those conditions. Consider formal support, accommodations, or consultation when relevant.

About this resource

AI-assisted original draft for More Than Therapy. Version 1.0. Source and editorial checks: 27 October 2026. Independent clinical review pending; no human clinical reviewer is recorded. The references below inform concepts and do not validate or endorse this original page.

Conceptual references

PB06 | Centre for Clinical Interventions, Government of Western Australia | Assertiveness: Improving Assertiveness Self-Help Resources

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<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Assertiveness>

PB07 | Department of Health, Government of Western Australia | Assertive Communication

https://www.health.wa.gov.au/sitecore/content/Healthy-WA/Articles/A_E/Assertive-communication