



Say This Instead

10 Parenting Phrases That Set Boundaries with Compassion

Designed for co-parents who want to lead with warmth - and hold the line.

Why this matters:

During and after a divorce, it's easy to slip into "yes" mode. Maybe you feel guilty, maybe you're trying to avoid conflict, or maybe you're just exhausted. But kids need more than comfort, they need structure. That's where authoritative parenting comes in: high warmth, *and* high expectations.

This guide gives you simple, real-life phrases to help you stay connected and consistent, without raising your voice or second-guessing your choices.

Say This Instead

Situation	Instead of this...	Try saying this:
Your child is upset about a rule	"Because I said so."	"I get why you're frustrated. This rule helps keep things fair and safe."
They want something you can't give	"No, and that's final."	"I wish I could say yes, but this isn't something I can do right now."
They break a boundary	"You're grounded forever."	"This choice has a consequence. Let's talk about what happens next."
You feel pressure to say yes	"Fine, whatever."	"I love you too much to say yes to something that doesn't help you."
They compare your house to the other parent's	"That's not my problem."	"It's okay that we do things differently — my job is to keep you safe here."
They argue nonstop	"I'm done. Go to your room."	"I'm here to listen when we're both ready to talk calmly."



They beg for screen time	"Ugh, fine — just go."	"I know it's hard to hear no. We'll try again tomorrow."
They shut down emotionally	"What's your problem?"	"It seems like something's bothering you. I'm here when you're ready."
You're worried about over-parenting	"I have to control everything."	"My role is to guide you, not to fix everything."
You're just tired	<i>Silence or snapping</i>	"I'm feeling overwhelmed. Let's take a break and come back to this."

One Last Tip:

You don't need perfect words, just presence, clarity, and calm. Your consistency matters more than your script.