



*You can
be clear,
kind and
respectful
without
over-explaining.*



What Do I Say Instead?

A Practical Guide to Responding to Emotionally Immature Parents

When you've spent years explaining, defending, or trying to get a parent to understand your perspective, changing the conversation can feel uncomfortable. The goal isn't to find the perfect response that finally makes them understand. It's to respond in a way that protects your energy, communicates what needs to be communicated, and doesn't pull you back into explaining yourself over and over.



When this happens...	Instead of...	Try saying...
1  They question or criticize your decision	Giving more and more reasons until they agree with you.	"I've thought it through, and this is what I've decided."
2  They demand to know why	Treating their disagreement as a sign that you haven't explained yourself well enough.	"I understand you want more information. I'm comfortable with my decision."
3  They keep pushing after you've answered	Finding new ways to explain the same thing.	"I've answered this, and I'm not going to keep discussing it."
4  They are disappointed by your boundary	Immediately changing your plans so they won't be upset.	"I understand you're disappointed. My answer is still the same."
5  They guilt-trip you	Defending yourself against every accusation or trying to prove you're a good daughter/son.	"I know this isn't what you wanted. I'm still going to do what works for me."
6  They dismiss or minimize your feelings	Trying harder to convince them that your feelings are reasonable.	"You don't have to see it the same way I do. This is how I experienced it."

*Shorter responses.
A calmer you.*



*You don't have to
fill the silence with
another explanation.*

*Different responses.
A calmer you.* ♥



When this happens...	Instead of...	Try saying...
7  They tell you you're too sensitive or overreacting	Presenting evidence for why you're entitled to feel hurt.	"We may see this differently. I'm not going to argue about how I feel."
8  They become defensive when you raise a concern	Reassuring them so much that your original concern disappears.	"I'm not saying you're a bad person. I'm telling you what didn't work for me."
9  They make the conversation about themselves	Abandoning what you were trying to communicate to comfort them.	"I hear that you have feelings about this. I'd like to finish what I was saying."
10  They expect an immediate answer	Saying yes because you feel pressured and regretting it later.	"Let me think about that and get back to you."
11  They criticize your boundary as selfish	Trying to prove that your boundary isn't selfish.	"You may not agree with my boundary, but it's what I need right now."
12  The conversation becomes circular	Staying until you've finally made your point clearly enough.	"I don't think continuing this conversation is helpful. I'm going to stop here."

Before You Explain Again, Ask Yourself...

- 1 Am I giving useful information — or am I trying to get permission?
- 2 Have I already answered this question?
- 3 Am I explaining because I want to, or because their disappointment feels uncomfortable?
- 4 Would more information actually change this conversation?
- 5 What would I say if I knew I didn't have to make them agree with me?



*Pause.
Check in.
Choose what serves you.*



A Reminder to Take With You

Your parent may still be disappointed. They may disagree with your decision. They may misunderstand your intentions.

A boundary isn't successful because the other person likes it.

Sometimes the shift is learning that you can be clear, kind, and respectful without making someone else's agreement the condition for trusting your own decision.

And if you catch yourself over-explaining again? That's okay. These patterns were often learned over many years. Noticing that you're doing it is part of learning that you have another option.

You can choose differently. ♥