

6. The Real Choice Boundary

A choice is only real when more than one answer is genuinely acceptable. Use this to decide which decisions belong to the child, which need adult boundaries, and which still belong to adults.

Child decides

Adults may advise, but more than one outcome is genuinely acceptable.

Child decides within boundaries

Adults set the safe/affordable range; the child chooses inside it.

Adult decides

Safety, essential care, legal limits, major family commitments, and adult-sized consequences.

The uncomfortable question

Where are we offering a “choice” even though the adult has already decided what answer will be accepted?

Different caregivers or homes can set different boundaries. The child should still be able to tell which decisions are genuinely theirs.