

# Healthy Boundaries: The Intersection of Identity and Self-Care

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# Why Boundaries?

- Working in this field is an identity-driven experience that exists in a specific context
- There are no “perfect” boundaries and few “right” answers for how to set boundaries
- This workshop is a framework for decision-making on working creatively, sustainably, and responsively to clients

# Agenda

- Professionalism and Vulnerability
- Definitions
  - Boundaries
  - Dual Relationships
  - Boundaries Crossing vs. Violation
- Creating a Culture of Respect
- Sources and Further Reading

# Professionalism and Vulnerability

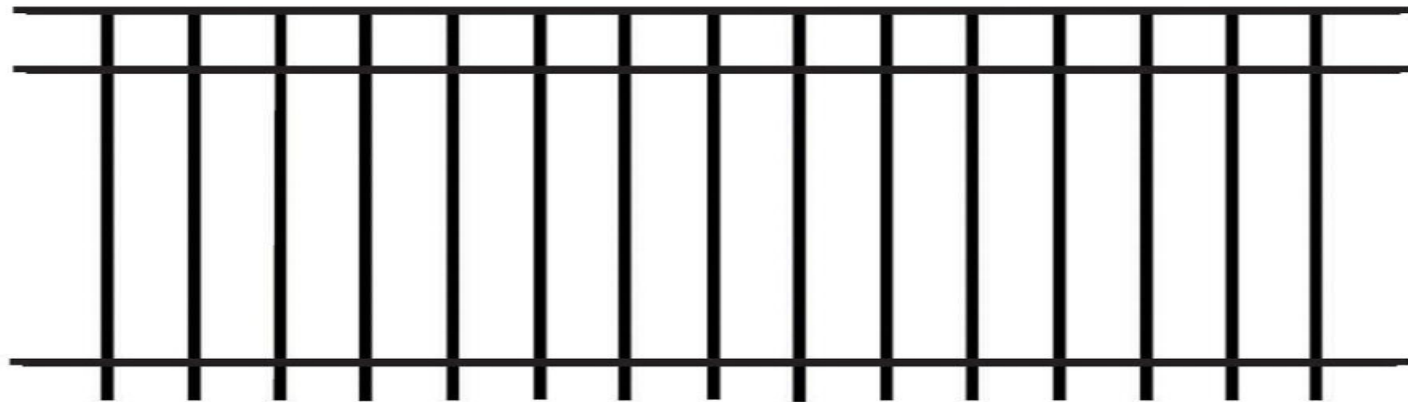
**Consider a time when you needed help or expertise from a professional.**



What does it feel like to need help?

# Professionalism and Vulnerability

Think of a personal or professional boundary that you hold in your own life.  
What about a boundary someone else has set with you?



## Wounded Healers

Professionalism  
and  
Vulnerability

Why did you come to this  
work?

Superhero?

Martyr?

Helper?

# When do you need boundaries?



Friendly Services vs. Friendship

Emotional Engagement and Impact



Physical Contact



Giving or Receiving Gifts



Working on Days Off



Attending Family Events



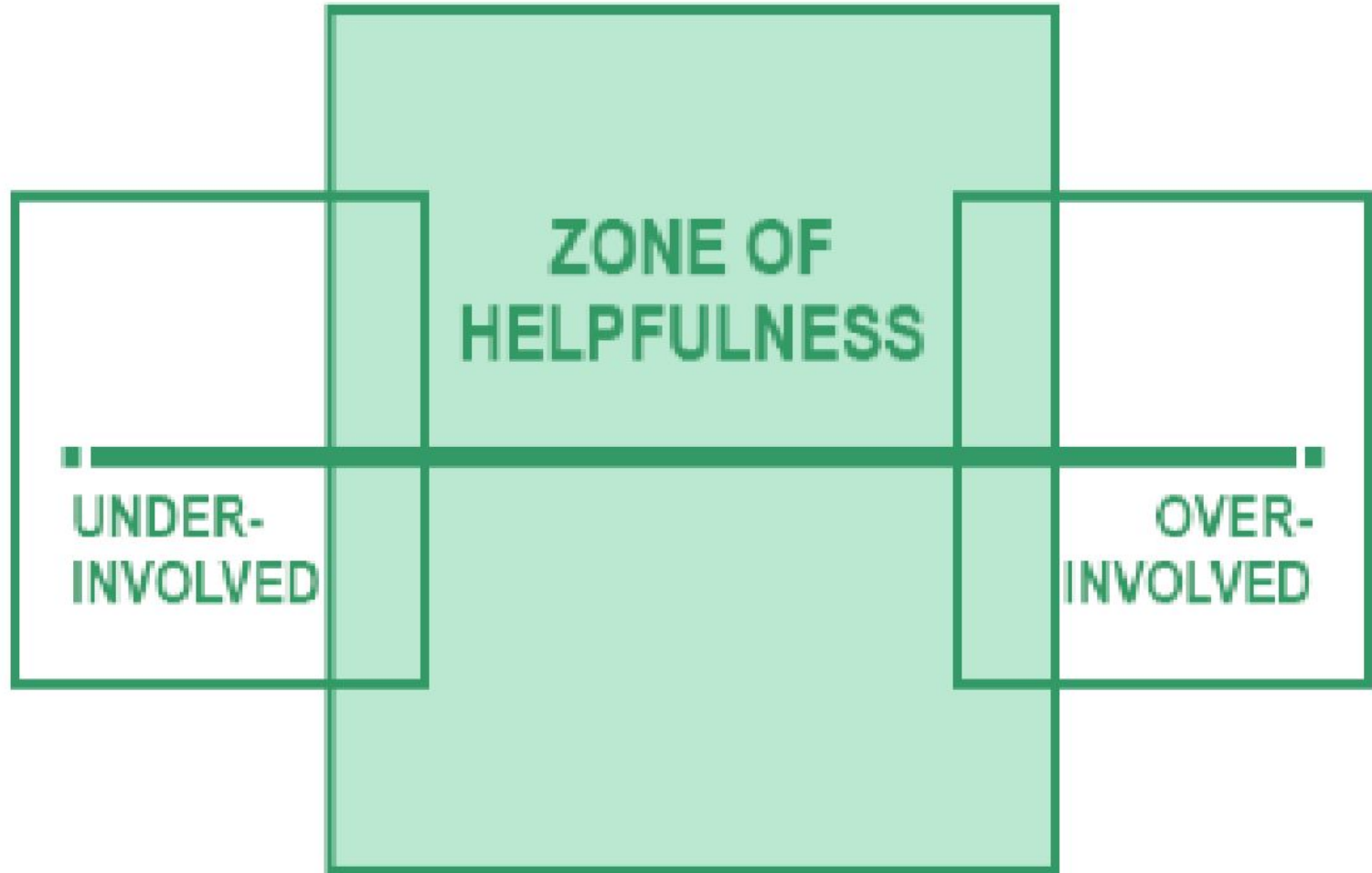
Sharing Personal Beliefs

# Boundaries: Where we end and clients begin

- Boundaries = healthy power dynamic
- Boundaries = therapeutic
- Boundaries = values-driven



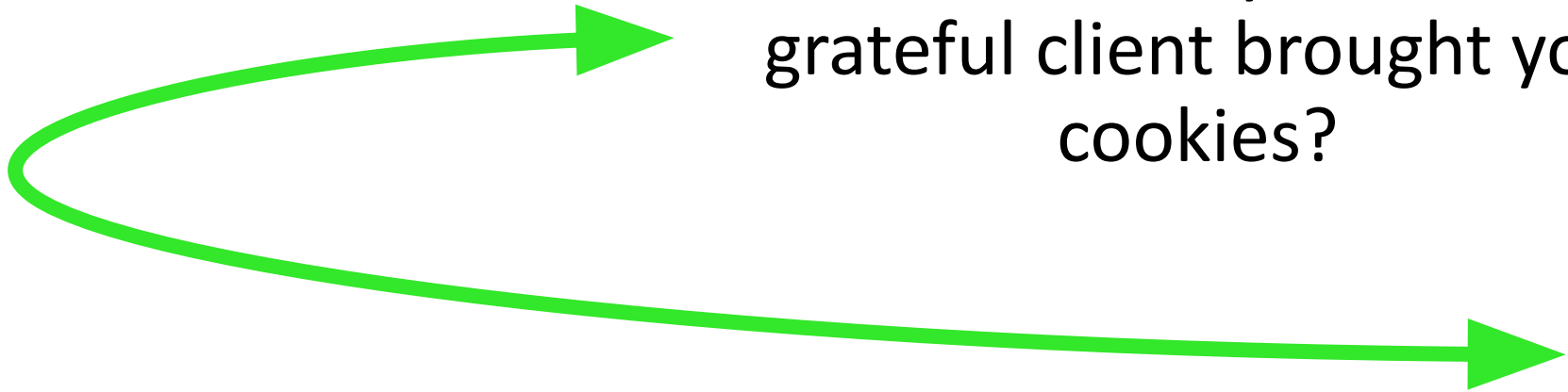
# Continuum of Professional Behavior



Boundaries  
are simple,  
not easy

Things we do can be ok in  
one context and not in  
another.

What would you do if a  
grateful client brought you  
cookies?

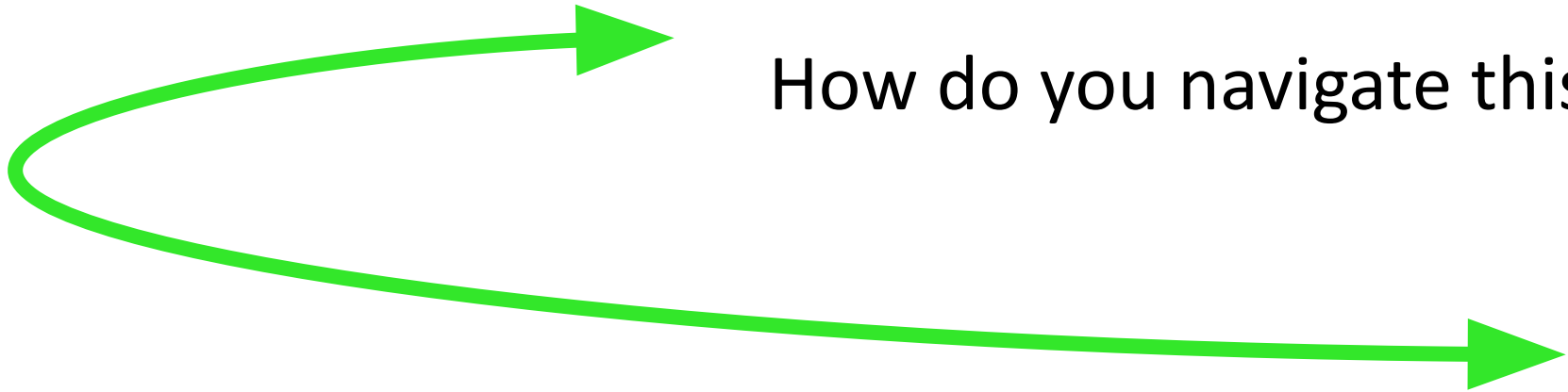


Boundaries  
are simple,  
not easy

We push against barriers!

And now I'm supposed to  
"enforce" boundaries?!

How do you navigate this?



## Projections

Factors that  
make  
boundaries  
necessary

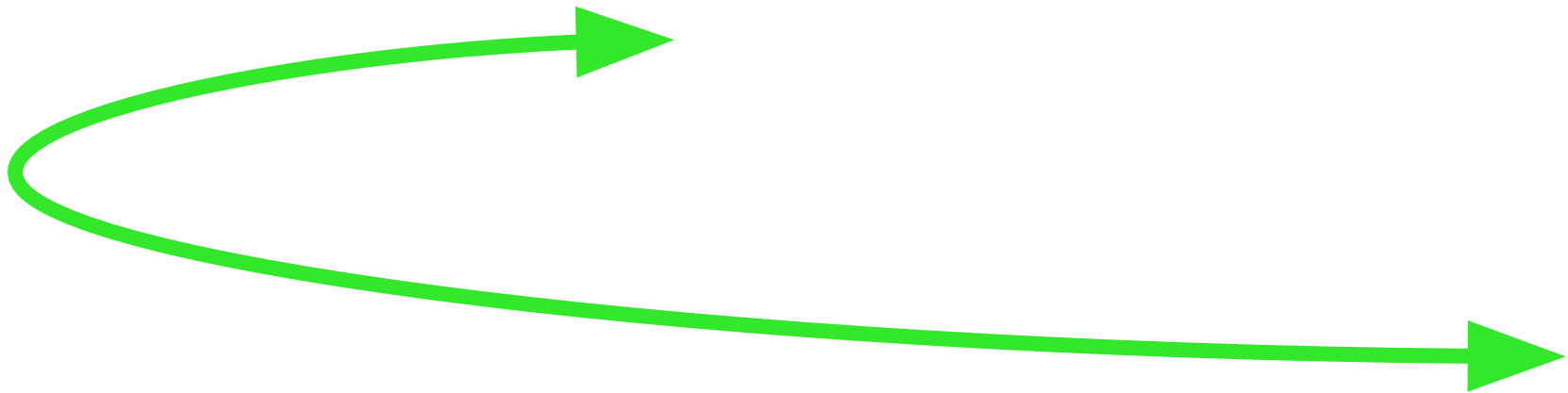
- Transference
- Counter-transference



Factors that  
make  
boundaries  
necessary

**Values Conflict:**

Disconnect between client  
and staff values





**Resentment is a  
sign you need to  
*set a boundary.***

Factors that  
make  
boundaries  
necessary

### Dual Relationships

- Exist whenever a service provider is in multiple roles with the client
- Not always unethical; often unavoidable

# Central Themes Leading to Dual Relationships



Emotional Engagement and Impact



Physical Contact



Friendly Services vs. Friendship



Unanticipated circumstances

Working on Days Off



Giving or Receiving Gifts



Attending Family Events



Sharing Personal Beliefs



Factors that  
make  
boundaries  
necessary

## Dual Relationships Could

- Interfere with ability to be fair, professional, and helpful
- Exploit clients, colleagues, or 3<sup>rd</sup> parties to further the staff person's interests
- Harm clients colleagues, or 3<sup>rd</sup> parties

# Boundaries: Crossing vs. Violation

## Boundary crossings

- Professional is involved in a dual relationship with a client/colleague that is not intentionally exploitive, manipulative, deceptive, or coercive
- Not inherently unethical—can be harmful, helpful, or neutral

# Boundaries: Crossing vs. Violation

## Boundary violations

- Professional engages in a dual relationship with a client/colleague that is exploitive, manipulative, deceptive, or coercive
- Involve conflicts of interest that harm clients or colleagues

# Agenda

- Professionalism and Vulnerability
- Defining Boundaries
- Dual Relationships: Boundaries  
Crossing vs. Violation
- Creating a Culture of Respect
- Sources and Further Reading



# Creating a Culture of Respect with Boundaries

- Know yourself +
  - Know your role +
  - Trust your team =
- Prevent burn out



**Resentment is a  
sign you need to  
*set a boundary.***

# BOUNDARIES

IT IS NOT MY  
JOB TO FIX  
OTHERS

IT IS OKAY  
IF OTHERS  
GET ANGRY

IT IS OKAY  
TO SAY  
NO

IT IS NOT MY JOB  
TO TAKE  
RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR OTHERS

I DON'T HAVE TO  
ANTICIPATE THE  
NEEDS OF OTHERS

IT IS MY JOB  
TO MAKE  
ME HAPPY

NOBODY  
HAS TO  
AGREE WITH  
ME

I HAVE A  
RIGHT TO  
FEEL MY OWN  
FEELINGS

[WWW.LISAAROMANO.COM](http://WWW.LISAAROMANO.COM)

I AM ENOUGH



# Creating a Culture of Respect with Boundaries

- Differences abound
- Disagreement is healthy
- Transparency begs accountability
- Allow for mistakes



# Creating a Culture of Respect

- Plan in advance (as much as possible!)
- Align with culture of organization
- Define what you will and will not do for clients
- Define what you will and will not allow from clients
- Be the example

# Boundaries During Remote Work

- Build off of the structures that already exist
- Set up new guidelines that respect both staff and clients
- Continue to develop a culture of transparency and accountability

# Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

“This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise...

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way...

We are prophets of a future not our own.”

**Full text:**

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prophets-of-a-future-not-our-own>

# Sources and Further Reading

- Respecting Boundaries — The Don'ts of Dual Relationships

<http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/012610p18.shtml>

- Examining the Complexities of the Social Worker–Client Relationship

[http://www.nlasw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Practice\\_Matters%20- Social Worker Client Relationship.pdf](http://www.nlasw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Practice_Matters%20- Social Worker Client Relationship.pdf)

- Boundaries training quiz

<https://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=boundaries-training-quiz>

- The Boundaries of the Social Work Relationship Revisited: Towards a Connected, Inclusive, and Dynamic Conceptualisation

<https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article/43/1/135/1695229>

- Client Relationships and Ethical Boundaries for Social Workers in Child Welfare

[http://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/ethics-articles/Client\\_Relationships\\_and\\_Ethical\\_Boundaries\\_for\\_Social\\_Workers\\_in\\_Child\\_Welfare/](http://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/ethics-articles/Client_Relationships_and_Ethical_Boundaries_for_Social_Workers_in_Child_Welfare/)

- Boundaries Issues in Social Work: Managing Dual Relationships

<https://www.bu.edu/ssw/files/2017/07/Reamer-F.-Boundary-Issues-in-Social-Work-Managing-dual-relationships.pdf>

- Maintaining Professional Boundaries in Interpersonal Work

<https://cloudfront.ualberta.ca/-/media/medicine/departments/anesthesiology/documents/boundariestrainingcurriculum.pdf>

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