

Healthy Boundaries for Helping Professionals



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Why Now?

Working remotely, working creatively, working responsively to clients requires a healthy relationship with boundaries and accountability.

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Agenda

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



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Professionalism and Vulnerability

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

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Professionalism and Vulnerability

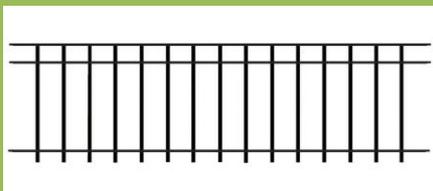
What does it feel like to need help?



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Professionalism and Vulnerability

- Think of a personal or professional boundary that you hold in your own life.



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Wounded Healers

**Professionalism
and
Vulnerability**

Why did you come to this work?
Superhero?
Martyr?
Helper?



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When do you need boundaries?



Friendly Services vs. Friendship

Emotional Engagement and Impact



Physical Contact



Giving or Receiving Gifts

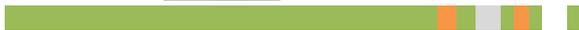
Working on Days Off



Attending Family Events



Sharing Personal Beliefs



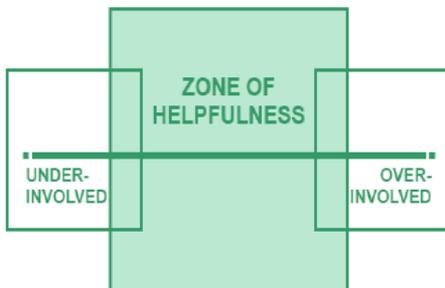
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Boundaries: Where we end and clients begin

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

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Continuum of Professional Behavior



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Quiz Check in: Question 1

1. Which of the following are true about boundaries?
A. A boundary is a behavioral framework within which you must function in order to perform your role.
B. Boundaries can be legal, ethical, moral or professional.
C. Boundaries are 100% the responsibility of the staff person to maintain in the relationship between staff and client.
D. All of the above

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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?



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Boundaries are simple, not easy

Social workers push against boundaries!

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

How do you navigate this?

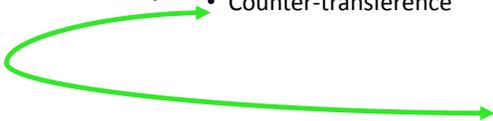


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Projections

Factors that make boundaries necessary

- Transference
- Counter-transference



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Factors that make boundaries necessary

Values Conflict:
Disconnect between client and staff values



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Factors that make boundaries necessary

Values Conflict:
Best practices \neq what you must share with the client



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Quiz Check in: Questions 2

Which of the following are indicators that you may be having boundary troubles?
A. Having a hard time saying "no" to a client.
B. Wanting to save or rescue a client.
C. Sharing unnecessarily personal stories with a client.
D. Wanting to punish or control a client.
E. All of the above

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Factors that make boundaries necessary

Dual Relationships

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

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Central Themes Leading to Dual Relationships

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Quiz Check in: Questions 3-6

A client discloses that he is gay and wants to know if there are staff in your office who are gay, what do you tell him?

- A. Explain to the client that there are 2 gay people working here, but that you can't disclose their names.
- B. Engage the client in a conversation about why he is curious, keep clear boundaries regarding staff confidentiality and explain that all young people are accepted regardless of their sexual orientation.
- C. Explain to the client that you can't disclose personal information about staff members and that you don't really feel comfortable talking about his sexual orientation.
- D. Both B and C

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Quiz Check in: Questions 3-6

A young person is constantly asking you for hugs and seems to invade your personal space whenever you are near. How should you handle this?

- A. Hug the client as much as you can because she really needs attention.
- B. Avoid the client as much as possible to avoid the situation.
- C. Explain to the youth that you need personal space when at work, but that you would enjoy talking to her about how she is doing.
- D. Have other staff members hug her to free up some of your time.

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Quiz Check in: Questions 3-6

A young person is very agitated because she has not had a cigarette in two hours. She knows you smoke and asks you for one. What do you do?

- A. Explain to the client that smoking is bad.
- B. Give the client a cigarette, but make sure she knows you can only do this once.
- C. Let the young person know that you can't give her a cigarette and try to help her through the difficult time.
- D. Make sure staff are aware of the youth's struggle so they can be supportive as well.
- E. Both C and D

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Quiz Check in: Questions 3-6

A client informs you that her uncle is a mechanic and will fix your car for free. Your finances are a little tricky and you need your car for school and work. What should you do?

- A. Get her uncle's number and call him after work hours.
- B. Sincerely thank her for the information and thoughtfulness, but let her know that you can't accept the gift.
- C. Tell her you can't do that because you would get in trouble, but mention her name when you take your car in to get it fixed.
- D. Ask her to have her uncle call you to make arrangements.
- E. None of the above

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Factors that make boundaries necessary

Dual Relationships Could

- Interfere with professional discretion
- Interfere with impartial judgment
- Exploit clients, colleagues, or 3rd parties to further the staff person's interests
- Harm clients colleagues, or 3rd parties

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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

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**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

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Quiz Check in: Questions 7-8

Which of the following staff factors may put you at risk for a boundary violation?

A. The need to be liked or approved of by clients.
 B. The belief that other staff members don't really understand or care about the young person as much as you do.
 C. Poor communication with other staff members and supervisors.
 D. Working in a residential setting.
 E. All of the above

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Quiz Check in: Questions 7-8

Also– remote work!

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Quiz Check in: Questions 7-8

Which of the following would not be considered a boundary violation?

- A. A staff person lending, borrowing, giving or receiving gifts, money or personal property from a client.
- B. A staff person engaging in physical horseplay with a client.
- C. A staff person sharing personal religious views, taking clients to a staff member's church and proselytizing to clients.
- D. A staff person talking to a client about the client's personal problems at home.
- E. Staff disclosing to a client personal problems, drug or alcohol use and work-related gossip.

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Creating a Culture of Respect

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

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Creating a Culture of Respect

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

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Creating a Culture of Respect

- Plan in advance
- 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

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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

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Quiz Check in: Question 9

It is important to use your co-workers and supervisors to discuss clients or situations that bring up uncomfortable and confusing feelings. Small lapses in judgment or confusion about proper conduct can usually be handled at the supervisor level without bigger problems developing.

- A. True
- B. False

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Sources and Further Reading

- Respecting Boundaries — The Don'ts of Dual Relationships
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- Examining the Complexities of the Social Worker–Client Relationship
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- 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/bisw/article/13/1/135/1695229>
- 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/
- 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/boundarystrainingcurriculum.pdf>

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