

Developing Appropriate Boundaries

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What are Boundaries?

Simply put. . .

A boundary is the emotional or physical space **you allow** between yourself and another person

What are Professional Boundaries?

Professional boundaries are not only the space between you and the client, but also what defines and differentiates our roles as counselor and client

What are the Purpose of Professional Boundaries?

Professional Boundaries. . .

Professional Boundaries. . .

Define who we are as a counselor

Protect the client and ourselves

Help us take care of ourselves

Define Who We are as a Counselor

Why are you in this field?

Unresolved identity issues will lead to poor boundaries and choices

Effective practice depends upon a clear identity as a counselor and

A clear delineation of our professional roles

Protecting Ourselves and the Client

The counselor is always in a position to subordinate the client's interests to his/her own interests

Why?

Because there is **ALWAYS** a clear power differential between the client and the counselor!

The counselor's influence and the client's vulnerability will **ALWAYS** be present!

Boundary confusion and boundary violations will reinforce destructive beliefs and behavior patterns and negatively impact the therapeutic relationship

Taking Care of Ourselves

Boundaries help us
Clarify our roles
Endure the stress
Let go
Increase positive outcomes

Myths About Boundaries

I will hurt the client
It will lead to conflict
I will be accused of a power trip
I will get rejected
It will be seen as a threat
I have to get angry to set a boundary

Signs of Weak Boundaries (trouble's a brewin')

Thinking:
No one else can help this client
The program will fall apart without me
I really like/hate this client
This client has **got** to get recovery
My way is the only way
What I want is what the client needs

More Signs of Weak Boundaries

Disclosing personal needs or problems
Practicing outside your competence
Feeling like you must protect a client
Bending the rules for a client
Overinvolvement with clients
Overwork and not caring for self
Taking a different role with the client

Even More Signs of Weak Boundaries

- Touching the client
- Feeling overwhelmed by client issues
- Arguing with other staff over clients
- Staff acting out family roles
- Acting out client issues
- Acting out your issues with client
- Becoming their drug
- Loss of perspective

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

Any practice or decision concerning a professional boundary can be assessed based on ethical principles

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

- Will the boundary benefit the client?
- Will the boundary foster client autonomy?
- Will the boundary promote trust and the attainment of therapeutic goals?

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

It is **always** the counselor's responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries!

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

Don't:

- Be their drug
- Take responsibility for their issues
- Work harder than they do
- Act out their anxiety
- Break the rules for them

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

Do:

- Let the program structure work
- Separate the urgent vs. the necessary
- Be clear about your own issues
- Be realistic about outcomes
- Be very aware of your physical space
- Work closely with the treatment team

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

Learn your triggers

What type of client triggers you, both positively and negatively

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

Increase your awareness of your feelings towards the client

Remember:

Strengthening Professional Boundaries

A good counselor knows what's going on with the client, a great counselor knows what's going on inside themselves!
