



Boundary Management

Establishing and Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

Objectives

At the end of this session, participants will:

- ▶ Be able to explain the importance of managing boundaries
- ▶ Be able to identify types of boundaries and establish healthy boundaries
- ▶ Demonstrate understanding of managing boundaries and its relevance to managing stress and positive mental health
- ▶ Understand the role of empathy in managing boundaries
- ▶ Be able to maintain healthy boundaries by communicating effectively
- ▶ Be able to demonstrate assertive behavior and its importance in maintaining health boundaries

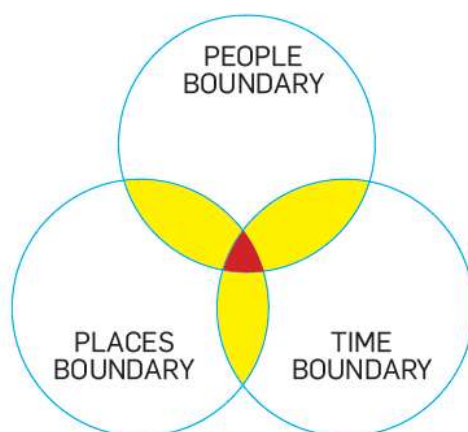


Why have boundaries?

- ▶ Boundaries provide structure
- ▶ To protect and take care of ourselves and others



What are boundaries?



Types of boundaries

- ▶ Enmeshed or collapsed boundaries
- ▶ Emotionally detached or rigid boundaries



Common Danger Zones

- ▶ Role confusion (not rescuer, not helper, not friend or counsellor, not expert in housing or finance issues...)
- ▶ Not keeping to scheduled contact, time and place
- ▶ Meetings are not planned, goals unclear or unrealistic
- ▶ Taking on too much responsibility, doing jobs which are not in your remit, client not engaging actively



Common Danger Zones

- ▶ Social contact outside professional context, over-familiarity, becoming friends with clients
- ▶ Becoming emotionally involved, identifying too strongly with a client's distress, difficulties
- ▶ Not being able to switch off after hours
- ▶ Dual relationships



Some reasons why we find it hard to set boundaries

- ▶ Altruistic Instincts
- ▶ Lack of training/awareness
- ▶ Personal emotional needs, pressure to succeed
- ▶ Thinking-errors, irrational beliefs, or ANT's we might hold about our job or life
- ▶ <<use of self>>, way to help reflect on our work-practice. Is what we're doing really in our client's interest?
- ▶ Gap-filling due to lack of other services provided by statutory bodies



Exercise

Decide in the following situations whether or not professional boundaries are being crossed

- ▶ Going for a drink with a student to celebrate exam success
- ▶ Listening to a student talk about their financial problems
- ▶ Leaving the office for an hour in the middle of the day because you're feeling too stressed
- ▶ Going over the allotted time when a student has arrived late for an appointment
- ▶ A student approaches you in the corridor and tells you they took an overdose last night
- ▶ Engaging with a student's mother who calls up to say she believes her daughter is having an affair with one of the lecturers
- ▶ Accepting an invitation to a student's house party



Managing the challenge – some guidelines

I. Awareness of **YOUR** role

- ▶ Are you fully aware of your role, the limits of your job and responsibilities?
- ▶ Are your colleagues fully aware of your role?
- ▶ Is the service user fully aware of your role?
Clarify this at the beginning
- ▶ Client role and responsibility, collaborative effort
- ▶ SAYING << NO >>



Managing the challenge – some guidelines

2. Not doing it on your own
 - ▶ Awareness of the role of others
 - ▶ Consulting with other professionals
 - ▶ Delegating, knowing how and when to refer on clients
 - ▶ Peer support and supervision



Managing the challenge – some guidelines

3. Awareness of established procedures/protocols
 - ▶ Suicide ideation, allegations
 - ▶ Behavioural change
 - ▶ Critical incidents



Managing the challenge – some guidelines

4. Awareness of ethics/professional standards
 - ▶ Storage of data (Data Protection Acts)
 - ▶ Sharing of information
 - ▶ Consent forms
 - ▶ Confidentiality and its limits
 - ▶ Duty of Care
 - ▶ Disclosure



Managing the challenge – some guidelines

5. Manage time and place

Managing place

- ▶ Set the physical boundaries. Do you see students in your office, where feasible, and only during work hours?
- ▶ Debriefing sessions can be done over the phone, clients can leave a message after work hours, rather than engage you in a chat



Managing the challenge

– some guidelines

5. Manage time and place

Managing your time

- ▶ Expect the unexpected, allow for interruptions, stick to time set
- ▶ Avoid appointments back to back, give yourself some head space between appointments, time to write notes, take breaks
- ▶ Set goals
- ▶ Structure meetings



Managing the challenge

– some guidelines

6. Protecting our own mental and physical health, set your work-life boundaries

- ▶ Are you vulnerable to stress? Who isn't?!
- ▶ Do you feel secure?
- ▶ Do you enjoy life? Take time out?



Managing the challenge

– some guidelines

7. Adopting a healthy attitude to your job:
 - ▶ Get rid of those ANTs in your mind! (Automatic Negative Thoughts)
 - ▶ Changing the way you think will help you feel better and act more constructively



Establishing boundaries – office

- ▶ Culture of office/organisation
- ▶ Management of time
- ▶ Physical space
- ▶ Clarity of roles
- ▶ Clarity of rules
- ▶ Consistency



Tips

If something is causing concern:

- ▶ Put it on record with your manager
- ▶ Seek assistance in re-establishing boundaries
- ▶ Be aware of your own behaviour



Physical contact

- ▶ Status
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Culture



Psychological

- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Manipulation



Why people break boundaries

- ▶ Innocence
- ▶ Power



Exercise

Decide in the following situations whether or not professional boundaries are being crossed

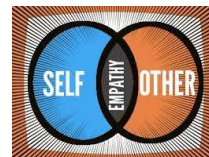
- ▶ You are concerned that one of your colleagues has become too emotionally involved with a student
- ▶ Taking a phone call at 10pm
- ▶ Staying with a suicidal student until help arrives
- ▶ A student who is struggling emotionally says they will only deal with you...
- ▶ Staying in the office until 9pm at night because you are just too busy
- ▶ Asking a colleague to participate in a meeting with an angry or distressed student
- ▶ Becoming friends with students of Facebook
- ▶ Following them on Twitter



Empathy

“the psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.”

.....in other words;



.....Empathy is simply recognising emotions in others and being able to “put yourself in another person’s shoes” – understanding the other person’s perspective and reality as best we can



Practicing empathy – Impact on you

Advantages

- Helps you understand the other person
- Gives a different view point
- Helps identify possible underlying issues
- Gives the other person the opportunity to “get things off their chest”
- Lets the other person see that you care
- May help in discovering solutions

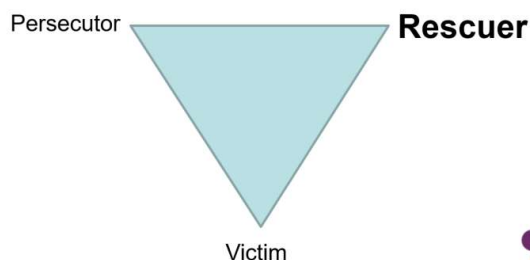
Disadvantages

- Can be time consuming
- The other person can become over dependant on you
- Can be overwhelming
- Could “bring you down”
- **Can test your boundaries**
- You start “living it” for them
- Can be tiring
- Tests your patience at times



Relevance of boundaries to mental health

- Healthy boundaries reduce stress
- Drama triangle (Karpman)



Healthy boundaries – characteristics

- ▶ Assertive
- ▶ Have a strong sense of identity and self respect
- ▶ Responsibility and power are shared
- ▶ Know when the problem is yours or when it belongs to someone else



Healthy boundaries – characteristics

- ▶ Share personal information gradually in a mutually sharing/trusting relationship
- ▶ Don't tolerate abuse or disrespect
- ▶ Know your own wants, needs and feelings and can communicate them clearly
- ▶ Committed to and responsible for exploring and nurturing your full potential



Assertiveness

- ▶ Assertiveness is based on balance
- ▶ Aggressive behaviour is based on winning



Developing your Assertiveness

- ▶ Value yourself and your rights
- ▶ Identify your needs and wants and ask for them to be satisfied
- ▶ Acknowledge that people are responsible for their own behaviour
- ▶ Express negative thoughts and feelings in a healthy and positive manner
- ▶ Receive criticism and compliments positively
- ▶ Learning to say no!

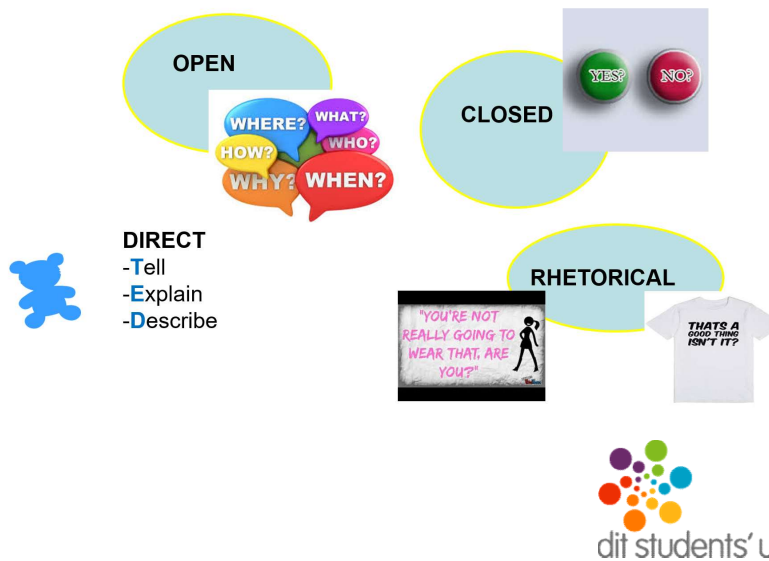


Assertive Communication Techniques

- ▶ 'I' statements
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Escalation
- ▶ Ask for more time
- ▶ Change your verbs
- ▶ Become a broken record...



Communication – questioning skills



Listening Skills

Listen to the entire message that the other person is trying to communicate;

- **Listen with your ears** – what is being said, and what tone is being used?
- **Listen with your eyes** – what is the person doing with his or her body while speaking?
- **Listen with your instincts** – do you sense that the person is not communicating something important?
- **Listen with your heart** – what do you think the other person feels?



Principles for Coping and Good Mental Health

- Accept that even when you are 'having a bad day', there are still good moments in it.
- Acknowledge what is going well and what you are doing well.
- Know how behaviours impact on your mood.



Helpful Actions

- Plan something each day that you can enjoy.
- Give yourself credit for something you did well.
- At the end of each day, write down three good things that happened.
- Be responsible regarding alcohol & drugs: They can lead to low mood.
- Breathing and relaxation techniques take little time and do help.
- Talk to someone.
- Get some exercise everyday

