Self-Care Series: Boundaries and Limit Setting

Amisha Raja, Psy.D.
PTSD Program Manager

Anthony Russo, CPS
Peer Support Specialist
MIRECC Peer Education Center Co-Director
Learning Objectives

Identify 3 reasons it is important to have boundaries.

Identify how and why knowing ourselves is necessary to establish boundaries and set limits.

Identify at least 4 ways to set a limit or boundary.
Compassion Fatigue - “Cost of Caring” as a helper - manifested as physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.
- acute onset: can occur quickly without warning

Burnout - Emotional exhaustion related to work in a helping role in a health care setting
- gradual onset
Boundary Power

“How I treat you”

“How I let you treat me”

“How I treat myself”

(O’Neil & Newbold, 1994, Title page)
Boundaries

- Helps us to know ourselves and what is important and meaningful for each of us as individuals.

- Teaches us to have respect for ourselves and others.

- Teaches us to be responsible for our behavior when interacting with others.

- Helps us to be assertive about our personal needs.

- Helps reduce the chance of being in a situation that could be harmful to us.

- Helps us to be more accepting of others by recognizing their personal boundaries.
Why Are Boundaries Important?

Determines who owns the problem? What we think of ourselves is more important than what others think of us.

“It is none of our business what others think of us (unless we have violated their boundaries and we owe them amends).”

(O’Neil & Newbold, 1994, p. 7)
Know ourselves and what’s important
To be separate and unique
Knowing what we need
Teaches responsibility
Builds assertiveness
Keeps others from manipulating us
Empowers us
Builds self-confidence
Builds acceptance of others
Remove or reduce defenses
How to act appropriately in relationships
Reduces anger
Why Are Boundaries Important?

We can’t begin to set limits until we figure out what our boundaries are. This means knowing ourselves!

- What we like or don’t like
- What we don’t like and won’t put up with
- What we can negotiate or put up with
- What do we value? What is important
- Can we compromise without losing ourselves?
- Awareness of personal prejudices/diversity issues
“Empower us to have self-discipline, maturity, and strength of character.”

“Empowers us to say no when we need to say no and yes when we really want to say yes.”

(O’Neil & Newbold, 1994, p. 17)
Limit Setting Techniques

“Say what you mean, mean what you say, and don’t say it mean.”

Unknown
How To Set Up Good Boundaries

- Know which “hat” you’re wearing (peer support or personal)
- Try to be as neutral as possible
- Be pro-active vs. reactive
- Think before you speak
- Repeat your limit if necessary
- Agree to disagree
Limit Setting Techniques

When another violates your boundaries, it’s about that person (problem ownership)
- Try not to take it personal

If you allow another to violate your boundaries, it’s now about you
- i.e. not being assertive, speaking up for yourself...

(O’Neil & Newbold, 1994, p. 5)
Keeping Good Boundaries

I’m wearing this “hat”
I need to set this boundary
I’m not you
I don’t like...
It’s inappropriate...
This doesn’t work for me...
This could be harmful...
I can’t help you with this...
My concern is...
I need to think about it
I’ll get back to you
How does an hour sound to get together?
I can’t right now, but I can...
I expect this to remain confidential
We talked about this before, I need to say it again
I feel ... It makes me feel ...
I need to take care of myself

*Practice setting good boundaries from the beginning! It often prevents many future difficulties.*
Work Related Boundaries To Protect Yourself

Don’t date your consumers, supervisor, supervisees or members of your treatment team

Don’t handle consumer’s money for any reason

Gifts
- Don’t accept gifts
- Don’t buy gifts for consumers, supervisor, supervisees or member of your treatment team
Time Management

- Arrive and leave on time
- Take your allotted breaks.
- Be prepared for meetings
- Don’t take work home with personal identifying data
- Avoid taking work home
- Seek consultation with your supervisor
- Take care not to mix your roles as peer support provider/friend/family member/etc.
Work Related Boundaries To Protect Yourself

Don’t give out ...
– Your personal telephone/cell phone number
– Home address or town for yourself or others you work with
– Personal family issues or problems details
– Specific details about your treatment, medications

Overall themes/recovery story is okay
WELCOME TO DOGBERT'S SEMINAR ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE.

FIRST, REVIEW THIS LIST OF YOUR PRIORITIES.

FAMILY JOB EXERCISE VACATION MUST-DOS MEDICAL EATING HYGIENE SLEEP ROMANCE HOLIDAYS

YOU HAVE TIME FOR THREE THINGS. WORK AND HOLIDAYS ARE TWO. YOU GET TO PICK THE THIRD.
Unique Challenges

Balancing work and former or current personal relationships

- Setting the limits when off-duty, and person says “It’s your job...”

- What was your role during the first/initial contacts (friend or professional)?
Unique Challenges

Responding to seeing your consumer in your community based recovery activity (i.e. AA, NA, etc.) or out in public
- Do you initiate contact?
- Will you or the other person feel “safe” to share?

Responding to consumer invitations (boundaries are blurred and confusing)
- i.e. barbeques, special events
- Do you go as a friend or peer?
- What are the benefits of attending?
- What are the potential pitfalls (negative perceptions)?
Reference

Anthony Russo, CPS
Certified Peer Specialist
MIRECC Peer Education Center Co-Director
anthony.russo1@va.gov
781-687-3322

Amisha Raja, Psy.D.
PTSD Program Manager
Edith N. Rogers Memorial VAMC
amisha.raja@va.gov
781-687-3510