Got Ethics?!: Maintaining Healthy Boundaries in the Workplace

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Ethics Defined

- ✓ Greek word "ethos" meaning character.

- ✓ Study of principles relating to right and wrong conduct.

- ✓ Standards that governs the conduct of an individual or members of a profession. (ASSC)

Ethics Defined

- Set of guidelines for conduct.

- Are not laws or rules, even though a violation may lead to breaking a law or negative consequences.

- Most of the time there is no absolute right or wrong, many grey areas.

Why is it important to Talk About Ethics?

As Professionals we carry out many functions of helping people so that the mission and goals of our organization can be accomplished.

Ensures we complete our work with honesty and integrity.

Why is it important to Talk About Ethics?

Guides our behavior to adhere to our Organization's policies & procedures, employee handbook, etc.

Safe guard the Housing Services Professional and the Organization's reputation.

Why is it important to Talk About Ethics?

We work with a diverse and vulnerable group of individuals with a variety of needs who may also present with poor or unhealthy boundaries.

As professionals, we encounter dilemmas that may create ethical and boundary issues and concerns.

When Do We Use Ethics?

On a daily basis

To determine best practice in meeting the needs of our residents.

When we are unsure of how to proceed or struggling with a dilemma. (grey areas)

Personal Values

Professional Values

Cultural Values

Ethics Are Influenced by your Values

Lessons Learned

Your ethical orientation and personal and professional values change and evolve as you continue in your career.

With each ethical dilemma you encounter, there is a lesson to be learned.

Principles of Ethics

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Non-Maleficence
- Veracity

- Justice
- Respect
- Professionalism
- Role Fidelity

Autonomy

Greek word autos-nomos meaning self-rule, or self-determination.

Refers to the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed and un-coerced decision.

Autonomy

Individuals we serve have a right to self-determination, even if at times, we do not agree with their decisions, or choices.

Beneficence

Refers to actions that promotes well-being and serves the best interests of the individuals we serve.

Non-Maleficence

- Obligation that we act in ways that do not inflict, or cause avoidable, or intentional harm.

- *First, Do No Harm*

Veracity

- Principle of truth telling, grounded in respect for the persons we serve.

- Basic expectation that we are honest in all of our professional interactions.

Justice

- Requires that we act in ways that treat people equitably and distribute benefits and burdens fairly.

- *What we do for one we do for all*

Respect

Refers to the concept that we afford and treat all people with respect and that all individuals deserves the right to fully exercise their autonomy.

Professionalism

Ethics and standards of practice for a particular profession that are typically agreed upon and maintained through widely recognized professional associations.
(NASW, AASC, IREM)

Role Fidelity

Faithful devotion to duty which entails specific loyalties associated with a particular professional designation. (AASC/RSC)

Boundaries Defined

Noun, plural -ries.

1. A line that indicates bounds or limits.

II. Rules that define the limits of professional behavior.

III. Limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships.

BE THE
VOICE

Boundaries Defined

A Dividing Line
distinguishing between two things

This is okay _____ *This is not okay*
The distinction between right/wrong, good/bad,
okay/not okay, appropriate/inappropriate
may not always be crystal clear

**The line that separates the You from the
Individuals you serve.**

BE THE
VOICE

Personal Boundaries

Guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave towards them.

Group Activity

Share a Personal Boundary

Guidelines for maintaining a positive relationships with your colleagues and the individuals you serve.

Professional Boundaries

Sets behavioral limits and rules regarding workplace interactions.

Establishes what is acceptable workplace behavior and how this behavior affects the way workers communicate with one another.

Professional Boundaries

Allows the workplace to function adequately.

Helps employers develop procedures for disciplinary action for workers who violate codes of conduct.
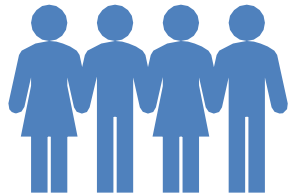
Professional Boundaries

Helps workers understand their individual roles and responsibilities.

Discourages inappropriate behavior by setting rules of conduct within the workplace.
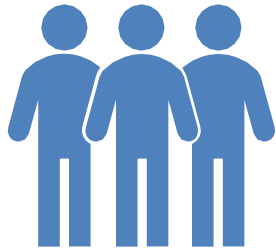
Professional Boundaries

Codes of conduct define what behavior is appropriate on the job and what behavior is unacceptable.

Examples: Establish standards regarding physical interactions so workers do not touch one another inappropriately.
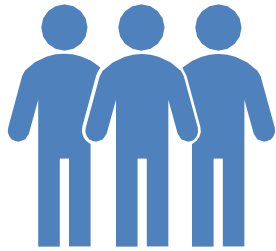
Power Differential

There is an inherent power differential and imbalance in the relationship between the Housing Services Professional and the individuals they serve.

Power Differential

Maintaining healthy boundaries helps the Housing Services Professional controls this power differential and promotes safe connections with the individuals they serve while meeting their needs.

Examples of Power Differential Relationships

- Parent/Child

- Teacher/Student

- Supervisor/Employee

- Therapist/Client

Examples of Power Differential Relationships

- Lawyer/Defendant

- Doctor/Patient

- Housing Services Professional/Resident

- Police/Citizen

Power Differential

The responsibility for maintaining healthy boundaries is the responsibility of the Housing Services Professional even if the individuals they serve doesn't want boundaries.

Examples of Professional Boundary Violations

Sharing a white lie, gossip or an offensive joke.
(Therapeutic lying)

Using agency purchased office supplies for personal use

Using office computer to browse the internet for personal business such as making personal online purchases.

Examples of Professional Boundary Violations

Using company issued cell phone to make personal phone calls.
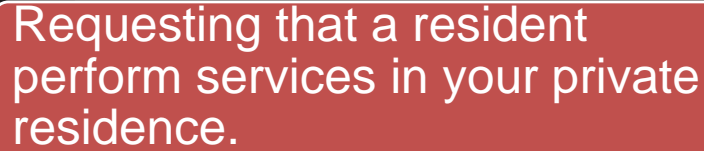
Calling in sick and you weren't sick.
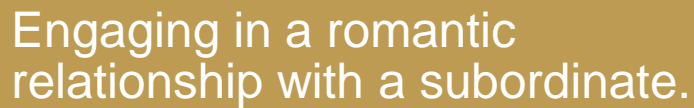
Creatively embellishing your resume.

Examples of Professional Boundary Violations

Requesting that a resident perform services in your private residence.

Engaging in a romantic relationship with a subordinate.

Taking extended lunch or coffee breaks.

Importance of Maintaining Professional Boundaries

- Clearly establishes expectations which allows for safe connections and interactions with colleagues and residents.

- Promotes healthier workplace, impacts staff morale, increases productivity, and retention.

Importance of Maintaining Professional Boundaries

- Provides a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.

- Being friendly, not friends.

- Reduces liability for the staff member and the Organization.

Importance of Maintaining Professional Boundaries

- Avoids or limits the violation of any Federal, State, and local laws.

- Provides a safe atmosphere where the Social Services Professional and individuals they serve are mutually respected.

Importance of Maintaining Professional Boundaries

- Reduces anxiety as roles, responsibilities and expectations are clear.

- Prevents enabling and codependency behaviors.

- Reduces the risk exploitation and acts of abuse.

Acts of Abuse

Any misuse of power, betrayal of trust and respect, or inappropriate intimacy between the Housing Services Professional and the individuals they serve that could reasonably be expected to cause physical, emotional, sexual, or financial harm and neglect.

13.5   Employee/Client Relationships

Refer to your Agency's HR Policy

13.5.3 Personal relationships between employees and clients are inappropriate and unacceptable.

13.5.4 Sexual relationships with clients are strictly prohibited.

13.5.5 Actions by employees that may arise from personal relationships, and which violate building rules or established agency policies, are subject to corrective action, up to and including termination of employment.

How are Boundary Decisions Made?

Depends on many variables, including:

- Title and position

- Professional skills

- Length of time in the profession

How are Boundary Decisions Made?

Depends on many variables, Including:

- Location of work

- Organization's risk tolerance

- Organizational values

How are Professional Boundaries Established and Enforced?

By Laws, Federal, State, and Local. Examples: HUD, Fair Housing Laws, and Tenant/Landlord Laws.

By licensing and certifying bodies.

How are Professional Boundaries Established and Enforced?

National Associations and Affiliations

By your agency's policies and procedures.
(Policies & Procedures Manual, Employee Handbook)

Signs of Healthy Boundaries

- Values own opinions.

- Doesn't compromise values for others.

- Shares personal information in an appropriate manner.

- Knows personal wants and needs and can communicate them.

- Accepting when others say no to them.

Tips for Creating Healthy Professional Boundaries

Do No Harm. (Benevolence)

Request and participate in training, ask questions (Knowledge)

Ask for assistance & support. (Supervision)

Tips for Creating Healthy Professional Boundaries

Do the best YOU can. (Competence)

What you do for one, you do for all. (Justice/Fairness)

Operate within the bounds of your educational training and expertise.

Tips for Creating Healthy Professional Boundaries

Establish clear agreements and expectations with your clients right from the beginning.

Clarify your roles & responsibilities frequently.

Address all boundary violations and warning signs early.

Tips for Creating Healthy Professional Boundaries

Disclose personal information only related to client's goals. (appropriate self-disclosure)

Utilize professional resources.

When in doubt, consult with your Supervisor and refer to your HR Employee Handbook

1. Examine your Values

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

Know and understand your values, how they've been shaped, and how important they are.

2. Communicate clearly

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

Establish your limits very clearly and communicate them effectively.

3. Don't Hesitate

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

When your boundaries are violated, it's important that you communicate it in the moment or shortly thereafter.

4. Create a Formal Structure

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

Have an agenda even if it's a meeting between you and your manager. It's efficient and positions you as a professional, especially if the person crossing a boundary is threatening or singling you out from coworkers.

5. Set Boundaries at Home Too

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

Establish boundaries at home with friends and family.

Examples include: no cell phones during dinner, or who will be responsible for paying bills, chores, etc.

6. Concrete Explanations

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

Focus on concrete explanations when setting boundaries. It's not productive to talk from your personal perspective or let your feelings get the better of you.

7. Anticipate and prepare for boundary violation

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

It's helpful to visualize your boundaries getting crossed and how you would deal with the situation should it arise.

8. Know what to do

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

Know where to go and who to consult with should a line be crossed in the workplace. Know your company's policies & procedures, the laws and your rights.

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

9. Recognize when someone or something has violated your personal or professional boundaries

Know what conduct is unacceptable and how best to deal with it.

10. Don't Let Fear Control You.

10 Tips for Setting Clear Professional Boundaries

Be brave, honest and sincere. Do not let fear control your decision making. Think clearly and rationally and try to find quantifiable or measurable impacts of boundary violations.

Examples of Porous Boundaries

- Over shares personal information.

- Difficulty saying No to the requests of others.

- Over involved with other's problems.

- Dependent on the opinions of others.

- Accepting of abuse or disrespect.

- Fears rejection if they don't comply with others.

Examples of Rigid Boundaries

- Avoids intimacy or close relationships.

- Unlikely to ask for help.

- Has few close relationships.

- Avoids any self-disclosure.

- Very protective of personal information.

- May seem detached even from romantic relationships.

- Keeps others at a distance to avoid the possibility of rejection.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Shares too much information about self before establishing mutual trust in a relationship.

- Avoids conflict.

- Possesses no clear identity or sense of self.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Has few or no close relationships.

- Has difficulty identifying wants, needs or feelings.

- Gives residents personal cell phone number, home address, friends on Face Book, etc.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Offering assistance outside of role.

- Frequently thinking about a resident when away from work.

- Making inappropriate requests of the resident.

- Barrowing money from or lending money to residents.

✓ Refer to your Agency's HR Policy

HR policy 13.5.6

- Financial transactions between employees and clients are not permitted. Money should never change hands between employees and clients.

- Employees may not purchase items from clients for sale, sell items to clients, loan or borrow money, have client run errands, or accept special discounts on goods or services from clients.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Shares work concerns or venting about other clients or team members.

- Asks residents t keep secrets.

- Develops personal relationships or physical attraction toward residents.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Referring to resident as a friend.

- Giving or receiving expensive or valuable gifts.

- Socializing with residents outside of work.

Characteristics of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Engaging in inappropriate physical touching.

- Providing residents with special attention or treatment.

- Denying they have violated boundaries when brought to their attention.

⚠ Behaviors That Can Weaken Boundaries

- Pushing yourself beyond your limits.

- Working long hours, no time off.

- Insufficient sleep. (6-8)

⚠ **Behaviors That Can Weaken Boundaries**

- Concealing your true feelings.

- Lack of Work/Life balance.

- Lack of social support network.

⚠️ **Behaviors That Can Weaken Boundaries**

- Doing too much for others while neglecting your own needs.

- Allowing people too much closeness or touching when you are uncomfortable.

Behaviors That Can Weaken Boundaries

- Using food or chemicals to avoid yourself: alcohol, caffeine, sugar, nicotine, and illicit drugs.

- Others??

Consequences

- Compassion fatigue and burnout.

- Potential for splitting on teams.

- Risk management, liability.

Consequences

- May lead to acts of unethically behavior.

- Compromised reputation.

- Physical and emotional trauma.

Coping Strategies

Be aware of your interactions.

Be cognizant of your feelings and behaviors.

Be observant of the behavior of other Housing Services Professionals (Mentor)

Always act in the best interest of the resident.

✓ Professional Development

Competence

- Education/Training

- Compliance

- Remain Current and Up-to-Date

- OK to ask for help!
- Familiarize yourself with your HR manual and Organization's Policies & Procedures

Receiving Gifts

- Whether it's the holidays, a special occasion, or some other milestone, your client may try to thank you for your hard work by giving you a gift.

- These situations are much more complicated than they seem because there are cultural, societal, and relationship factors to consider on top of the bond you and your client share.

Receiving Gifts

Ethical values and principles involved

- Importance of Human Relationships: Rejecting the gift may taint the rapport you've built, perhaps over several years, or leave the resident feeling like you are personally rejecting her.

- Integrity: Part of our job is to serve as a role-model by maintaining healthy and appropriate boundaries in professional relationships.

Refer to your Agency's HR Policy

Gifts, Cards, Tips, Flowers and Food Policy

- Employees not permitted to accept gifts/tips from residents, friends or relatives of residents.

- Cards are acceptable, but any enclosed gift card, cash, etc. has to be politely declined.

- Cards, candy, baked goods and flowers may be accepted on behalf of the community and must be displayed in common areas for the enjoyment of all.

Professional Boundaries and Conduct

- When does helping create a liability?

- Gifts: what is/is not appropriate?

- Importance of entire management team embracing professional boundaries.

THINK

T--is it true

H--is it helpful

I--is it inspiring

N--is it necessary

K--is it kind

When Providing Feedback

| Work/Life Balance | Don't try to control people or events.

Speak up!

Take relaxation breaks during the day.

Exercise. |

| Work/Life Balance | Allow yourself some playtime every day.

Practice positive self-talk.

Take time-off from work.

Tend to your garden of friends.

OK to ask for help. |

Dilemma | A situation that requires a choice between options that are or seem equally unfavorable or mutually exclusive.

	E	=	Examine your own values
# The Ethic Model	**T**	=	Think Laws/Ethics
	H	=	Hypothesize Actions (pros & cons)
	I	=	Identify Winners & Losers (win-win)
	C	=	Consult With Others (supervisor/mentor

Resources

- AASC – www.serfvicecoordinator.org

- NASW: www.socialworkers.org

- HUD Management/Agent Handbook:
  www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/scp/proguidance.cfm

- HIPAA Information
  www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/coveredentities/index.html

- Privacy Act: www.usdoj.gov/oip/privstat.htm