



Too Close for Comfort:™

Boundary Issues in the Professional/Client Relationship

Presented by:

Claudia Newman
NCA Associates

222 Somerset St. West, Suite 300

Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2G3

Tel: (613) 692-1879

cnewman@NCAassociates.com

www.NCAassociates.com

Objectives



- To increase awareness of boundary issues in the professional/client relationship
- To develop skills that aid prudent practice



Ethics

The Boundary Framework



The Onion Skin Analogy





What does the boundary
framework promote and prevent?

The Power that We Have



True or False?



Many professionals have difficulty in owning the power that they have in their relationship with their clients



What gives us our power?

What are Boundaries?

- Boundaries are the limits that allow for a safe connection between the professional and their client. This safe connection is always based on clients' needs – ***not wants.***

Boundary Violation



A boundary violation occurs when the professional places his or her own needs above the needs of their client so that the professional gains **personally and/or professionally** at the expense of their client.

General Characteristics of Boundary Violations



- Frequently appear harmless
- Begin as innocent situations
- Not recognized or felt as a violation until something goes wrong

Prevention: Tips & Tools



Key Red Flags

- Do you make your client feel special?
- Do you enter into self-disclosure? If so, what is your professional reason for doing so?
- Are you always right?
- Do you make your own rules - that is, you don't like "this" rule so you substitute your own?

Key Red Flags



- Do you have a ***pre-exiting*** dual relationship – e.g., being the professional plus friend or neighbour or business associate?
- Do you develop friendships with clients ***after*** they become your client?
- Do you enter into touch of a personal nature with your client, whether it is a hug or some other form of personal physical contact?

Key Red Flags

- Do you fail to define your professional role and the parameters of your service with your client?
- Do you place your personal beliefs or values before your clients' needs when you feel that it is in their best interests, i.e., in this situation you would do "this"?
- Do you promise on-going availability to your client, e.g. gave your home, cell number or email address?

Key Question - Whose Needs Are Coming First?

- Are my own values and beliefs “entering into” my work with my client?
- Have I gained at the expense of my client in any way?
- Have I started in the middle of “my story” i.e. does my client have all the information that they need to make a fully informed decision?

Other questions to ask yourself



- Would I document this decision/behaviour in my client's file?
- Would I like to see my decision/behaviour published in the newspaper?
- Can I explain **why** I took this course of action?

Be Clear



- Outline your service parameters
- Define your role
- Set your goals with your client
- Ensure client knows who & how to contact someone should the need arise

When in Doubt - Develop a Plan



- Consult, consult, consult
- Determine if there is an ethical issue
- Brainstorm options
- Develop, implement & evaluate an action plan
- Document, document, document

Remember



- Don't panic, you are human
- Seek advice/consultation
- Know your professional strengths and limitations
- Know your obligations – Regulatory College, Employer, other pertinent statutes or Acts
- Take responsibility for your actions - it is the heart of ethical practice