Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously.

PRENTIS HEMPHILL
Some guidelines...

- Participate as much or as little as you want (as long as you don’t distract anyone else).
- Talk about yourself or a hypothetical situations– it’s up to you.
- Support people are available if you need.
- If you feel uncomfortable– choose your challenge.
What is a Boundary?

- A line between what is acceptable, safe, or comfortable and what is not.

- A clear limit to the nature of relationships and what types of interaction are/are not part of the relationship.
Personal & Community Boundaries
Personal Boundaries

- My own preferences, values & beliefs
- What feels safe or comfortable for me
- My own limits
Examples

- How frequently or what time(s) you want to call or text
- How much you want to share on social media
- What personal details you want to tell your friends
- How much energy or time you have for someone else’s problems
- Your sexual limits—what you do and don’t want to do and in what type of relationship
Community Boundaries

- Shared agreements about the nature and limits of interactions based on the group's needs or purpose.

- What feels right for me is important, but must be reconciled with shared values or expectations.
Examples

- The cast of a play agrees not to start up new dating relationships during rehearsals
- Members of a youth group agree not to be on their phones during programs
- Students on a class trip agree not to be in other people’s hotel rooms
Barriers to Communicating Boundaries

- Not understanding your boundary
- Not knowing what to say
- Not wanting to hurt someone’s feelings
- Power imbalances
Knowing your boundaries.
Notice your body

- Feeling physically tired when hearing about a friend’s problems?
- Uncomfortable feeling in your gut when you are doing something that doesn’t feel right.
Identifying the Boundary

- What happened before you noticed your body?
- What didn’t you like about the situation or the other person’s actions?
- What did you want instead?
Communicating Your Boundary

- Breathe
- What’s going on? (name the behavior)
- How do I feel about it?
- What do I want/need?
- Ask for what I want/say what I need.

Setting boundaries can help you see how trustworthy the other person is.
Verbal Communication

Clear, Concise, Concrete.

When you ____________________
name the behavior

I feel ________________________________
communicate how you feel about the behavior (NOT THE PERSON)

I want/need ________________________________
what do you need to change going forward

Can you agree to ________________________________
verbal contract
Verbal Communication: More Distant Relationship

You may not always want to share your feelings. In that case, keep it simple.

- I’m not a hugger. Can you please not hug me?

- I need you to show up on time so I can leave work in enough time to pick up my kids.
Nonverbal Communication

- Tone
  - Respectful
  - Firm

- Communicating with our Bodies
  - Shoulders back
  - Maintaining physical distance
  - Not communicating aggression or nervousness
Scenario

Your best friend is going through a breakup. You want to be supportive, but it’s hard because they never ask about your life anymore. You want to be there for them, but you also need some breaks from their struggles.

- How would you want to talk to them?
- How could you be considerate of them without losing yourself?
Your best friend is going through a breakup. You want to be supportive, but it’s hard because they never ask about your life anymore. You want to be there for them, but you also need some breaks from their struggles.

Can you agree to _____________
• Appreciate that someone trusts you and themselves enough to tell you what they need

• Understand your own actions thoroughly. Get support if you can’t easily change.

• If you feel upset or uncomfortable that’s normal

• Remember this is your opportunity to show the other person you are trustworthy.
Power Imbalances & Boundaries
Power Imbalance Discussion

- Think of a situation in which someone with more power made it harder for others to communicate their boundaries. What did the person do? What was the effect?

- Think of a situation in which a person with more power made it possible or easier to communicate a boundary.
Some Strategies for Power Imbalances

- Just because someone has more power doesn’t mean you have a voice. It may be possible to set a boundary.

- Get support from a person with equal or more power.

- Identify written policies or other community boundaries that support you.

- Strength in numbers.
Addressing Boundary Violations & Concerns
Boundary Violations on a continuum

- Missed Social Cues
- Inappropriate Behaviors
- Abusive Behaviors
When We Observe Boundary-Violating Actions

- How do we initiate a conversation?
- Can we communicate a concern?
- What shared values guide us?
- What responses create trust?
- What responses create more concern?

Addressing the behavior can help us determine where it falls on the continuum
Awareness of Biases

- Cultural biases
- Staff in certain types of positions
- People who are well-respected & established vs. those who are new or unknown
- Differences in power or authority
  - It may be a bigger risk to speak to a teacher or parent than a younger sibling or friend
  - People in ANY position can be crossing boundaries
Challenging Conversations

...communicating effectively when someone else might not want to hear you
Breathe

- Clearly identify the problem
- Say what you want or what the group expects
  - Is this a personal or community boundary?
- Assess the response
- Agree on a next step
I saw (or I heard) ____________________

It concerns me because _________________

What were you thinking? Why did you make that choice?

At our school/in our community we believe/value/practice ____________

So I hope you will ____________________
Strategic Choices

- Speaking directly to the person or reporting to a supervisor
- Interrupting an interaction in the moment or talking to the person later
- Having a casual or serious tone

Your choices may be based on your personality, your experience, or your role in the organization.
Minimizing

Dismissing the problem or trying to convince you that you are overreacting
Strategies for Minimizing

- Maintain Conviction
- Communicate clearly about why the issue is important
Bringing up other problems or issues as an explanation
Strategies for Shifting Focus

- Bring focus back to the issue you raised
- Acknowledge any truth to the issues they raise
- Agree to discuss other issues at a later time but stay on track
Defensiveness

Expressing anger or disrespect in response to the concern
Strategies for Defensiveness

- Stay calm
- Avoid apologizing or minimizing your concern
- Maintain focus on the issue
- End the conversation if it is no longer productive
Closing & Questions

FURTHER INFORMATION

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