



# Assertiveness & Boundary Setting and Navigating Challenging Conversations

*with Housing Families Inc.*

**WELCOME!** Class will start soon.

While you wait, please feel free to use the chat box to write your name, pronouns, and one thing that is bringing you joy in this time!



# WHAT TO EXPECT

- We will be muting everyone to reduce background noise.
- Please respect each other and be accountable for confidentiality.
- Some lecture, some dialogue, some moving around, some roleplay.
- PowerPoint link for accessibility.



# ABOUT IMPACT

*IMPACT is a non-profit organization that works to prevent violence and abuse by giving people the tools to protect their safety and advocate for healthy relationships and respect in their communities and society.*

For more information, visit us at:

[impactboston.org](http://impactboston.org)




**What is a  
boundary?**



# WHAT IS A BOUNDARY?

- A line between what is acceptable, safe, or comfortable and what is not.
- By setting boundaries you are letting the people in your life know what is OK with you and what is not OK with you.



**Why might we  
avoid setting a  
boundary with  
someone?**

# PRINCIPLES OF BOUNDARY SETTING

1. Breathe.
2. What's going on? (*Name the behavior.*)
3. How do I feel about it?
4. What do I want/need?
5. Ask for what I want/say what I need.

***Note: Setting boundaries and noticing how someone responds is a way for us to learn how trustworthy they are.***



# SETTING A BOUNDARY

**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



# WHAT IS ADRENALINE?

- Adrenaline is a hormone produced in the body when there is a perceived threat or danger (the threat may be psychological).
- It is commonly known as the body's flight/fight/freeze response.
- Fight / flight / freeze evolved as a survival mechanism to help us react quickly to dangerous, life-threatening situations



**What changes in your body or behavior do you notice most when you feel stressed or nervous?**

# HOW ADRENALINE AFFECTS THE BODY

- Heart beats faster to push blood to organs and muscles
  - May feel heart racing
  - Limbs may be shaky, or feel cold or hot
- Airways in the lungs expand to draw in as much oxygen as possible with every breath
  - May experience shorter, faster breath
  - People often feel dizzy, lightheaded, or jittery



# ADRENALINE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Trigger your body's relaxation response:

- Deep breathing
- Tapping

Bring your brain into the present moment:

- Finding your breath
- Finding your points of contact



# ADRENALINE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

## Resourcing

- A resource is anything that elicits feelings of calm/safety/happiness.
- Happy place
- Name something that makes you feel calm, strong, or good.

# HOW WE COMMUNICATE

- Nonverbal communication plays a major role in any conversation. Before focusing on our words, people first notice:
  - Tone of voice
  - Body language
    - How we are sitting / standing / holding our body
    - Gestures/fidgeting/natural movement
    - Facial expressions
- In order to communicate effectively our words, tone of voice, and body language need to be as in sync as possible.



**What do you notice happens  
to your own tone or body  
language when you feel:**

Nervous or Scared?

Angry / Annoyed?

“Over it” / Shut down?



**Let's practice!**



# VERBAL BOUNDARY STATEMENTS

- No.
- No, thank you.
- Stop.
- Please leave me alone.
- Please don't speak to me that way.
- I don't want to talk about that.
- Let's talk about something else.
- Please don't ask me again.
- I'm sorry, I can't help you.
- Please respect my boundary.



Roleplay Demonstrations &  
Student Practice:  
***Boundary Setting***



*TAKE A BREAK*



# **CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS**



# A CHALLENGING CONVERSATION CAN BE...

- Asking questions that are uncomfortable for you or the other person
- Communicating a concern or problem you see with someone else's actions
- Questioning a common practice or widely held organizational belief
- Bringing attention to actions you see as inappropriate



**How might someone  
react or respond to us  
during a difficult  
conversation?**



# COMMON REACTIONS

- Accepting
- Minimizing
- Shifting Focus/Blaming
- Insulting/Mocking



# Demo #1





# REACTION#1: ACCEPTING

- Don't assume all challenging conversations will go badly!
- Sometimes the other person will hear what you've said and accept it.



# Demo #2



## **REACTION #2: MINIMIZING**

- Dismissing the problem or trying to convince you that you are overreacting



# STRATEGIES AGAINST MINIMIZING

- Emphasize that the issue is important to you.
- Communicate clearly about WHY it is important to you.



# Demo #3



## **REACTION #3: SHIFTING FOCUS/BLAME**

- Bringing up other problems or issues as an explanation
- Placing blame on other people
- Trying to move the conversation to a new topic



# STRATEGIES AGAINST SHIFTING FOCUS

- Stay on point, do your best not to get sidetracked.
- Acknowledge any truth in their response.



# Demo #4





# **REACTION #4: INSULTING / MOCKING**

- Expressing anger or disrespect in response to the concern
- Trying to turn negative focus on you

# STRATEGIES AGAINST INSULTING/MOCKING

- Stay calm.
- Don't let your ego get hooked.
- Avoid apologizing or minimizing your concern.
- Maintain focus on the issue.
- **End the conversation if it is no longer productive.**

# CHALLENGING CONVERSATION STEPS

1. Breathe.
2. Clearly identify the problem.
3. Say what you want/what you need to change.
4. Assess their response.
5. Think through next steps.

# STRATEGIES FOR HAVING EFFECTIVE CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

- Use consistent, neutral tone and body language to match your message, to the best of your ability.
- Emphasize that the issue is important to you.
- Do your best not to get off the topic.
- Acknowledge any truth in their response.
- *Don't let your ego get hooked!*



ROLEPLAY DEMONSTRATIONS &  
STUDENT PRACTICE:  
***CHALLENGING  
CONVERSATIONS***



## Questions? Connect with us!

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Support Resources

<http://impactboston.org/resources/support-services/>



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