



BOUNDARIES

Creating a safe, ethical (and sane!) school environment

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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 & ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES



PERSONAL BOUNDARIES



- Individual needs and limits
- What feels safe, comfortable or doable for each person
- The psychic or physical space each person needs to be effective in their job
- Can be different from coworkers



EXAMPLES: PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

- How much personal information you share with coworkers and students
- Answering texts or emails during off hours
- Socializing outside of work
- Attending school events that are not part of your job

ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES

- Parameters of your role in the organization
- Shared understanding of acceptable and appropriate interactions
- Reflected in written policies
- Consistent across the organization





EXAMPLES: ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES

- Jokes or comments that are not acceptable at school, even among coworkers that are friends
- Parameters for use of work email to promote outside events or activities
- Types of interaction with students that are off limits
- Parameters for when one student can be alone with one adult

IN SCHOOLS THAT EMPHASIZE INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

- More flexible and authentic relationships
- Boundaries may be less rigid, but still need to be clearly defined.
- Communication is more important.





BALANCING...

...your unique personality with your role at school.

Bringing the best parts of yourself to your work **in a way that supports the shared values, expectations, and goals.**

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BOUNDARY

- Breathe
- What's going on? (name the behavior)
- What doesn't feel right?
- Is it a personal or organizational boundary?
- What needs to change?

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



POWER IMBALANCES & BOUNDARIES

- 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.



SCENARIO

You are friends with a coworker outside of work. One weekend you go to a bar together and your coworker takes a few selfies of the two of you holding cocktails and dressed in clothes you would never wear to work. Your coworker posts the photos on Facebook without asking you. You're concerned because many of your coworkers are Facebook friends, and you're not comfortable with them seeing the photos.



COMMUNICATING YOUR BOUNDARY

- Clear, Concise, Concrete.
- Identify the specific behavior
- Identify the specific change that you want

VERBAL COMMUNICATION: MORE PERSONAL

When you _____
name the behavior

It concerns/concerned me
because _____
why the behavior is a problem

I want/need _____
what do you need to change

Can you agree to _____
verbal contract

VERBAL COMMUNICATION: LESS PERSONAL

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

- Please don't post photos of me on social media without my permission.
- I'm not a hugger. Fist bump instead.
- Please don't leave papers on my desk, put them in my mailbox.



NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Tone
 - Respectful
 - Firm
- Communicating with our Bodies
 - Shoulders back
 - Neutral facial expression
 - Not communicating aggression or nervousness
 - Avoid being too close to someone or standing over them

COMMUNICATION PRACTICE

You are friends with a coworker outside of work. One weekend you go to a bar together and your coworker takes a few selfies of the two of you holding cocktails and dressed in clothes you would never wear to work. Your coworker posts the photos on Facebook without asking you. You're concerned because many of your coworkers are Facebook friends, and you're not comfortable with them seeing the photos.

- Tone
- Body Language
- Clarity
- Focus



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Casual or serious tone
- Communicate in the moment or have a conversation after the fact
- Is this a chronic problem that needs to be brought to a supervisor?

ADDRESSING BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS & CONCERNS



BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS ON A CONTINUUM

Missed Social
Cues

Inappropriate
Behaviors

Abusive
Behaviors

BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS ON A CONTINUUM

Your coworker sings songs of a pop star not knowing the person's reputation for racism and homophobia

Your supervisee, who is also a friend, doesn't meet deadlines and expects you to let it go.

A coworker makes sexual jokes and comments.

WHEN WE OBSERVE BOUNDARY-VIOLATING ACTIONS

- How do we communicate a concern?
- What shared values guide us?
- What organizational policies guide us?

- What responses create trust?
- What responses create more concern?

**Setting a boundary helps us determine where it falls on
the continuum**



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.



DO I GO TO A SUPERVISOR OR HR? DO I INTERVENE AS A SUPERVISOR?

- Has a personal boundary been ignored or disrespected?
- Have you set the same boundary multiple times?
- Has an organizational boundary been crossed?

CHALLENGING RESPONSES

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



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

SHIFTING FOCUS

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

SKILL PRACTICE

Minimizing

Maintain
Conviction

Communicate
clearly about why
the issue is
important

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

Stay calm

Avoid apologizing or
minimizing your
concern

Maintain focus on
the issue

End the conversation
if it is no longer
productive



RESPECTING BOUNDARIES

- 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.



Questions and Discussion

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