



CMSM
2022

Healthy Boundaries



For Leaders of Religious Institutes

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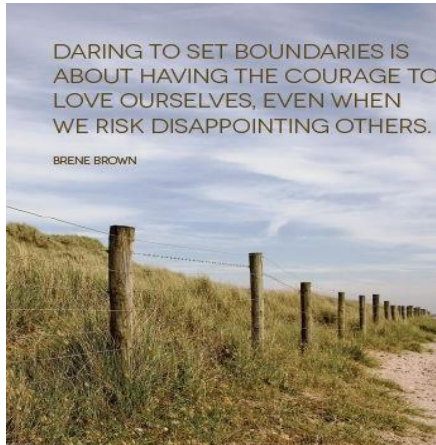
Boundaries

“Boundaries are norms, rules or codes that characterize an individual’s personal space or environment and his or her sense of security and safety. Healthy boundaries provide a nurturing and safe physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual environment for individuals.”

Len Sperry, MD, PhD, *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Church*, 2003

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Boundaries

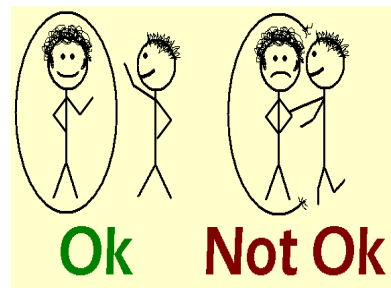


A boundary is your personal “property line.” It defines who you are, where you end, and where others begin.

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Boundaries

- are a physical or emotional or verbal limit that a person defines as safe or appropriate
- take time and effort and care and ongoing attention to maintain
- need clarity, definition, articulation, repetition, re-definition, transparency, and monitoring...



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Boundaries

Boundaries in relationships are essential,
at home/family/community and at work/ministry.

Why?

- Create mutual respect (for each other's personal space, comfort level, limits)...
- Ensure safety...build trust
- Clarify expectations...
- Communicate your needs and limits...
- Show the value of each person's well-being...incl. yours
- Allow for personal freedom, free from undue pressure



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Boundaries

Boundaries are essential in all realms of life, in all
realms of intimacy:

- Cognitive/Intellectual, Emotional
- Spiritual, Physical
- Cultural, Financial, Sexual ...



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Boundaries

Cognitive/intellectual boundaries

- recognizing and respecting each person's beliefs, ideas, values, viewpoints, perspectives
- assuring that each person's perspective and each person's voice is heard and valued, includes your voice
- making room for divergent views and experiences, without elevating one to a perfect standard
- letting go of resentments, past wounds

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Boundaries

Cognitive/intellectual boundaries

→ Communication specific boundaries:

- safe, clear, and written practices when disrespect or aggression is present (know what your expectation is, what you will tolerate and what crosses your boundary)
- safe, clear, and written process of what to do when a boundary is crossed (aggression, bullying etc..)
 - time out
 - end meeting
 - bring in third party
 - initiate a mediated process

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Boundaries

Cognitive/intellectual boundaries

→ Communication specific boundaries:

- remember you have a team, a council => not alone
- review principles of Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

NVC begins with the assumption that all human beings are compassionate by nature. However, there are specific forms of life-alienating communication that contribute to the violence in ourselves and society. When we *use labels to define the other*, these words can blind us to the point of being unable to see with compassion the uniqueness of each person. When I engage in *moralizing judgments*, or when I think in terms of *"it's good, or it's bad,"* that *"I'm right,"* or that *"I hold the truth,"* I have to ask myself the question: "What place do I leave to the other, who thinks differently from me?" To practice NVC is to *recognize that I am not alone*. NVC helps us to connect with each other in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish.

[Nonviolent Communication and Spirituality: Nurturing Empathic Communication](#)

[Southdown-Covenant-Summer2022_WEB.pdf](#)

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Boundaries

Emotional boundaries

- identifying what are your emotions, what are the other's emotions
- identifying what is your responsibility and what isn't (cannot take responsibility over the other person's emotions and feelings)
- what and how much and how deep you want to share
- what feels safe to share; trust; vulnerability level
- don't make your mood contingent on the other person's mood (previous concept of codependency)

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Boundaries

Physical boundaries

- what feels safe and comfortable in terms of touch
- what feels safe and appropriate in terms of meeting space (code of conduct – your level of comfort)
- what type of personal space does a person require
- what feels culturally safe and appropriate
- what feels safe and appropriate from a positional or personal power imbalance perspective (vulnerable person...)
- respect for a safe practice of distancing / removing self from conflict

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Boundaries

Financial boundaries

- clarity and equity regarding the use of accounts and potential limits on spending etc...
- is there an unspoken expectation about what is and isn't okay?
- are financial goals clearly expressed (limits clearly communicated)?
- clarity and equity with expected practices (reimbursements)

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Boundaries

Sexual boundaries

- clarity around the use of language
- clarity around the culture of a community, the expectations, the way sexual matters are being discussed
- is there safety, trusted space provided for judgment-free discussion/conversation?
- is there a sense of affective maturity or is there immature nervousness/deflective humour?
- is there an established process to deal fairly with all?

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Boundaries

Recognize, know, and embrace your power

- Often carries negative associations from the past
 - E.g., abuse, exploitation, mistrust, self-interests
- Not typically associated with positive experiences
- Religious and clergy may avoid acknowledging and recognizing their power

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Boundaries and Power

Recognize, know, and embrace your power

- To share our wisdom and experience
- To educate
- To guide
- To support
- To influence
- To provide understanding
- To provide leadership

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Boundaries and Power Imbalance

VULNERABILITY

1. Positional power

- A person in a positional power imbalance (e.g., a parishioner, staff member, person receiving spiritual direction or pastoral counselling, seminarian, supervisee) is *unable to give free, informed consent*
- Also includes a person who has received professional help/support from the priest or religious—even without knowing their role, status, function, etc.

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Boundaries and Power Imbalance

VULNERABILITY

2. Personal power

- This refers to a person in a context of personal power imbalance—for example, financial dependence, anxiety, depression, history of abuse or trauma, age/maturity



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Boundaries and Power Imbalance

VULNERABILITY

3. Spiritual power

- A person in a spiritual power imbalance is one who has sought spiritual advice from the person representing faith/spirituality/God
- This also includes a person who has sought safety in the ministerial role of the priest or religious (even someone who may not be a parishioner or a Catholic)



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Boundaries

Well-Being/Self-Care Boundaries

- is there an unspoken, implicit culture of workaholism?
- has the concept of self-care just become an empty slogan?
- do you know the difference between self-soothing behaviors and self-care behaviors (self-care inventory)?

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Make 2022 a Self-Care Journey

Self-Soothing?



amazon



Self-Care?



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Boundaries

Well-Being/Self-Care Boundaries

- do you have regular check-ins with leadership team about self-care?
- do you support and foster a process of seeking professional support/accompaniment?
- do we subtly and perhaps in unspoken ways perpetuate the mental health stigma?

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Boundaries

- Be **proactive** about your boundaries.
- Be **honest** with your boundaries.
- Be **realistic** with your boundaries.
- Be **clear** about your boundaries.
- Be **transparent** about your boundaries.
- Be **repetitive** with your boundaries.
- Be **boring** with your boundaries (if you are a risk taker, this is not the area!!!)

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Boundaries

- Be **reliable** with your boundaries.
- Be **consistent** with your boundaries (monitor when and why you make exceptions!).
- Think your **expectations** through ahead of time.
- Do not be caught off guard and have thought your own standards and boundaries through ahead of time.
- Rely on consultation.
- Document, document, document...

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Boundaries

- **Articulate** and **share** your boundaries clearly, and **make the implicit explicit** (eliminate the guess work).
- DON'T ASSUME to know the other person's boundaries → **ask permission.**
- DON'T ASSUME the other person knows your boundaries → **repeat and articulate.**

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