

Mon, Nov 23, 2020

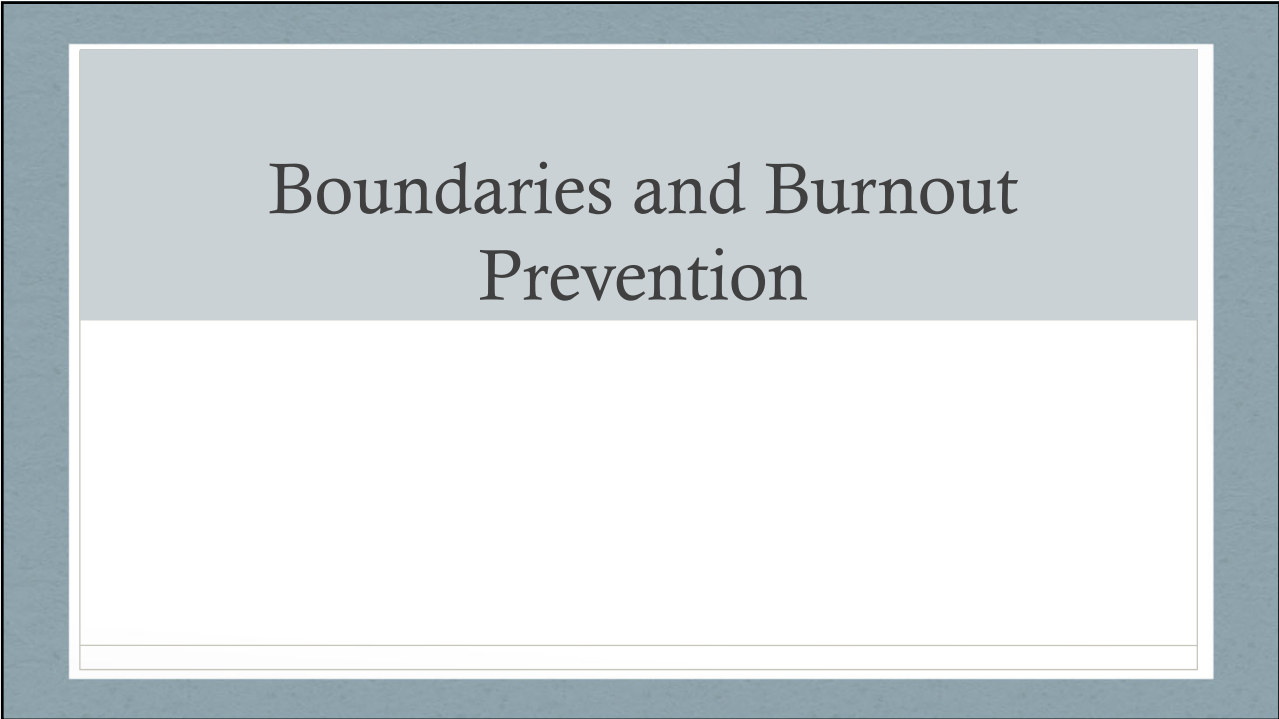
Self Care: Understanding the value of boundaries for advocates

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2020 Provincial Training Conference
September 17 - November 23

Legal Aid BC
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Boundaries and Burnout Prevention

Boundaries defined

- “A line that marks the limits of an area; a dividing line”
- OR
- “A limit of a subject or sphere of activity”

Self Awareness

- How do you visualize a boundary? Is it something between you and a client or something that you hold around yourself?
- Is there a symbol that comes to mind when you think of the word?
- How does it feel to set a boundary or to have a boundary challenged?
- Why these questions matter.

Holding Boundaries is Not Easy

- Expect boundaries to be “pushed”
- Expect that you may need to restate a boundary
- One way street – Professional boundaries are our responsibility. There is no ethical responsibility on the part of the client that they “respect” a boundary or that they themselves have the same understanding of the need for them.
- Triggers – know your triggers. When do you find it tricky to set or hold a boundary?

Possible Triggers

- Feelings of guilt – “maybe I could do more”
- Needs of the client
- Lack of services
- Expectations of clients, work culture, funders etc...
- The broader social context

Why it's hard to "just say no"

- Compassion and empathy
- The desire to be helpful
- Looking for solutions to unsolvable problems.

Signs that boundaries may need attention

- Over functioning
- Under functioning
- Assuming responsibility for the problem
- Making "exceptions": when and why?
- Thinking a lot about a particular client after hours
- Perseverating vs. Problem Solving

Crisis

- Are exceptions made in crisis situations?
- Pros and Cons: meeting a client's need vs setting expectations and disappointing a client in the future. Doing your best for one client and harming someone who may know that you've done something for someone else that you didn't do for them.
- If you make an exception does your colleague have to?

Covid and Boundary Issues

- Challenges in working from home
- Differentiating work persona from personal - Use of a symbol
- Self care symbols in the home office space
- Taking breaks
- How do I know I'm doing a good enough job?....
"I feel like I'm slacking off"
- Separating outcomes from performance and the pressure of funding

Covid: Affects on Clients

- Accessibility to services
- Barriers to accessing services
- Problems with referrals and gaps in service
- Helping clients with housing concerns, or with court related matters.
- Does the affect of Covid on clients challenge you in setting or maintaining boundaries?

Other Potential Boundary Issues

- Friendships with colleagues and co-workers
- Lack of clarity in roles (i.e. support vs counselling)
- Sharing of information (particularly in smaller communities)
- Advocating vs personalizing
- Closing with clients

Other Practices that Help

- Slow down
- Consultation and support of colleagues
- Mindfulness and Grounding at the beginning of the day
- Limiting discussion of work after hours
- Practices that help you let go of what you can't control
- Taking mini breaks through the day

A Word on Self Care

- If self care feels like a chore, or one more thing that you have to do, it is not self care 😊
- Finding balance - between work/life and in your thoughts
- Self compassion
- Getting out of the head and into the body – movement to discharge stress
- Allowing other to care for you