

# The Clinic for Boundaries Studies

## Psycho-Educational Programmes for Boundary Violating Clinicians

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# Session learning objectives

1. Increase understanding of professional boundary violations
2. Increase knowledge about doctors who violate boundaries
3. Increase understanding of contexts for professional misconduct

*I had no intentions of hurting him. [...] Mr. Jackson was my friend. I loved him. We had a great relationship. I was there to help him and I was going to be available should something go wrong, to help provide the best care for him.*

Dr Conrad Murray  
LAPD Interview 2009

*If only there were evil people  
somewhere insidiously committing  
evil deeds, and it were necessary  
only to separate them from the rest  
of us and destroy them.*

*But the line dividing good and evil  
cuts through the heart of every  
human being.*

*And who is willing to destroy a  
piece of his own heart?*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn  
The Gulag Archipelago (1973)

# Definitions

*Visitors to the Grand Canyon note that they are protected from falling into the chasm by a guardrail placed strategically at the edge of the canyon.*

*This safety measure allows children (and adults) to play and enjoy themselves while being at minimal risk for catastrophe.*

*[Professional boundaries are] a set of behaviours concerning:  
role; time; place and space; money; gifts;  
services; clothing; language; self-disclosure;  
and physical contact.*

Gabbard & Lester 1995

# Definitions

*The limits that allow for a safe connection based on the client's needs.*

Marilyn Peterson 1992

# Core concepts

Trust

Power differentials

Self-disclosure

Crossing/Violation

Vulnerability

Consent

Dual relationships

# Boundary crossing

The normal boundaries of the client-worker relationship have been crossed in some way, not necessarily harmful



# Boundary violation

A harmful boundary crossing,  
extent of harm varies, client's  
interests no longer at forefront.

# Some Forms of Violation

- Forming business relationships with patients
- Exploiting for financial gain
- Excessive self-disclosure
- Belittling/demeaning
- Pathologising
- Failing to treat
- Encouraging dependency
- Working beyond competence
- Breaking confidentiality
- Encouraging idealising transference
- Abrupt termination of treatment
- Reversing roles
- Establishing intimate relationships
- Discussing other patients

# Typology of Transgressor

1. Psychotic disorders
2. Predatory psychopathy and paraphilias
3. Lovesickness
4. Masochistic surrender

Gabbard

*Because after you've crossed  
some lines, you just keep  
crossing them.*

Chuck Palahnuik

*The creation of boundaries is at once a psychic necessity and an illusion.*

*The need to draw lines allows for the existence of categories – this is this and not that – and, in this way, boundaries make thinking possible.*

*We also establish rules that demarcate psychic space: don't touch me there, don't ask me that.*

*However, there are no real lines, even on a physical level, just horizons where one entity meets another and the outer skin defines the borders between the two.*

*In the psychic world, the lines are more blurry still. Who is to say where one's self ends and the other begins?*

Andrea Celenza 2007

*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling  
out,  
And to whom I was like to give  
offence.  
Something there is that doesn't love  
a wall,  
That wants it down.*

Robert Frost

*Like all walls it was  
ambiguous, two-faced.*

*What was inside it and what  
was outside it depended upon  
which side of it you were on.*

Ursula K. Le Guin

*Boundaries are actually the  
main factor in space, just as  
the present, another  
boundary, is the main factor  
in time.*

Eduardo Chillida



*I don't get to live by different rules. The same boundaries that apply to everyone apply to me.*

Tiger Woods

*Good fences make good  
neighbours*

Robert Frost

*Witticisms please as long as  
we keep them within  
boundaries, but pushed to  
excess they cause offense.*

Phaedrus

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