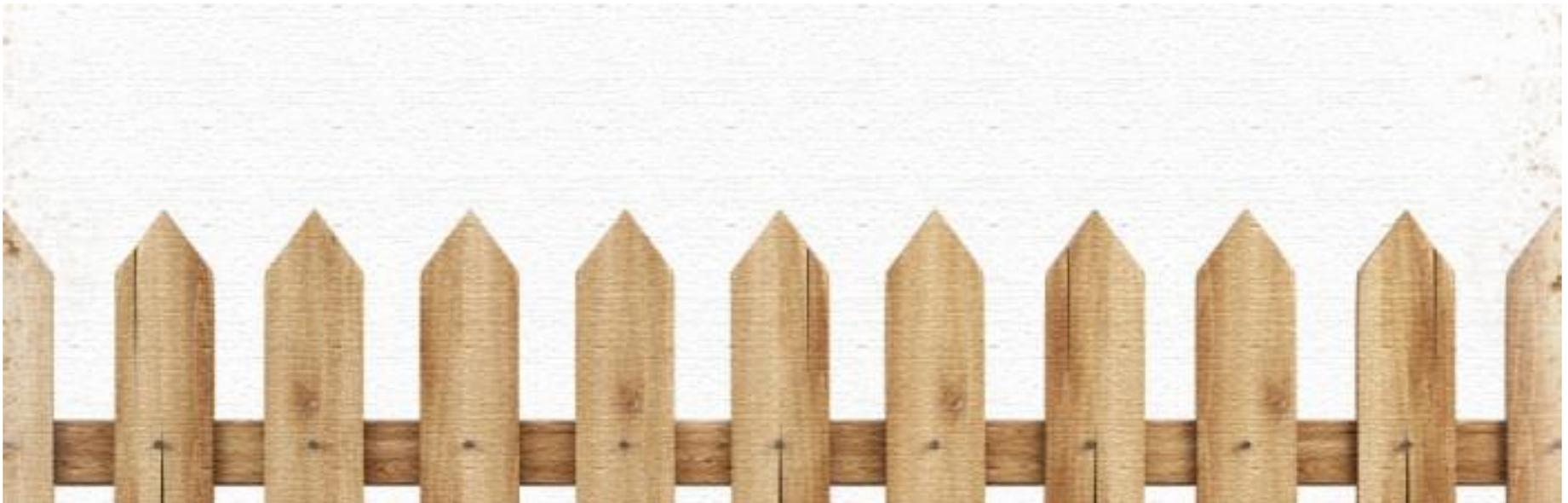


# PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES



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**MAINE COUNSELING ASSOCIATION**

*A State Branch of the American Counseling Association*



# Objectives

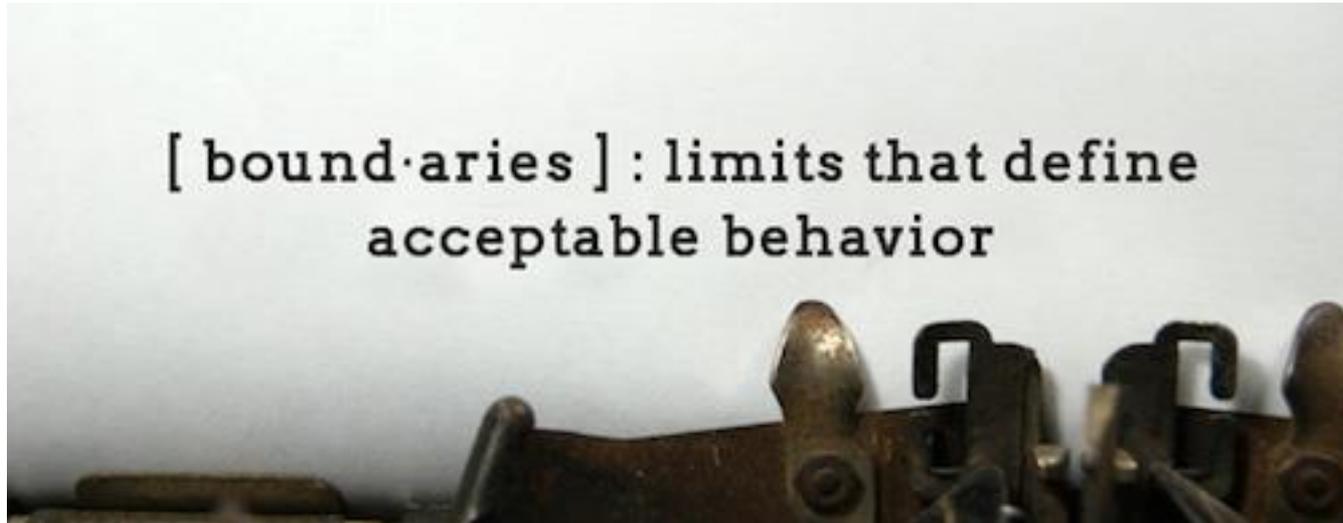


- Review the definition and purpose of professional boundaries
- Examine common causes of boundary problems
- Learn how to build and maintain good boundaries

# BOUNDARIES: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

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# A Definition



**Personal boundaries** are guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave towards them...

...**and** how they will respond when someone passes those limits.

# Types of Boundaries



*“You took such good care of me,  
I decided to sell my house and  
move into one of your rooms.  
Which one is available?”*

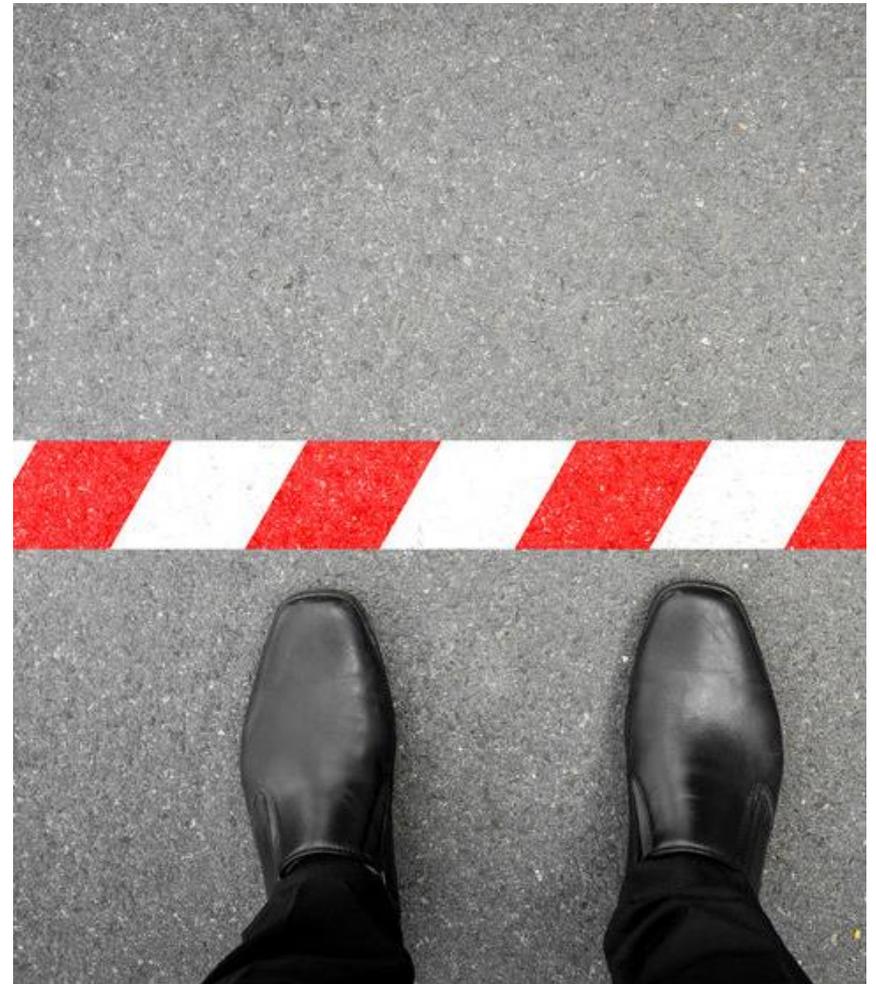
- Physical
- Emotional
- Workload
- Financial
- Time
- Informational
- What else?

Which of your personal boundaries are most often pushed at work?

What type of boundaries are most difficult for you?

# What are boundaries for?

- Protecting yourself
- Protecting others
- Keeping relationships appropriate to work roles



# Protecting Ourselves



From...

- Feelings of violation
- Burnout at work
- “No-win” situations
- Violating employer rules or the law

***With good boundaries, we help protect peers against these risks as well.***

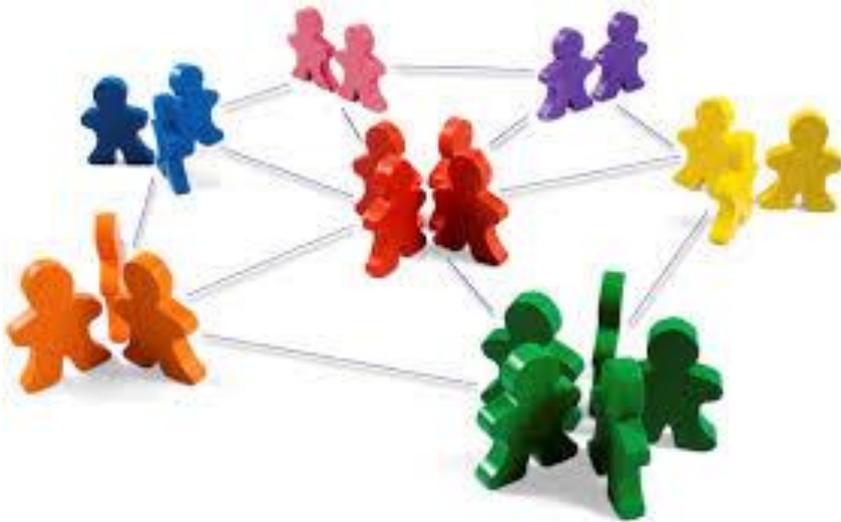
# Protecting Clients, Customers, and Patients



From...

- Unrealistic expectations
- Over-reliance on us
- Violating our organization's rules or the law

# Appropriate Work Role Relationships



## Ask yourself:

- What is my work role in this situation?
- What is the other person's role?
  - *Or, what are the other people's roles?*
- What is my work relationship to everyone involved?
- Would this action fit within our roles and relationship?

# BOUNDARY PROBLEMS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

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# What's really going on here?



Behind any boundary issue...

- A professional relationship has become personal, or
- People are losing sight of their roles, or
- Someone is trying to take advantage of a person or situation

# Warning Signs

- **Making exceptions**
- Choosing sides
- Keeping secrets
- Lending money
- Confiding personal issues at work
- Feeling like “I’m the only one who cares!”
- Feeling like “I’m the only one who can do this!”



# Warning Signs



- **Conflicts of interest**
  - When you have more than one motivation, and they don't match
- **Role confusion**
  - When you're not clear on your own role or on someone else's
- **Feeling pressured**
  - Or as if you're pressuring someone else

# Identify **Your** Warning Signs

- Whose needs take priority here?
- Am I treating anyone as different or special?
- If someone else was in my position, what would I advise them to do?
- Would I be comfortable with all my colleagues knowing I did this?
- Would I be comfortable if this came up first in a Google search for my name?

# Know Your Vulnerabilities



- People-pleasing
- Rescuing
- Workaholism
- Fear of conflict
- Difficulty saying no

- Impulsivity
- Exhaustion
- Certain types of people
- Limited experience
- Isolation

# Communicating Boundaries

“I statements”

Assertiveness Skills

Accountability

Identify

Identify boundary

Identify

Identify Consequence

Communicate

Communicate Boundary

Follow through

Follow through with Consequence



# Review

- Professional boundaries protect us and protect others
- Boundary problems arise from lack of clarity (in roles, relationships, or messages)
- To build and maintain good boundaries, recognize warning signs, know your vulnerabilities, and consult with others.



# Contact Us

StrengthenME and Healthy Life EAP are here for you with trainings, support groups, stress management groups, and individual support.



Scan QR code to complete our training survey.



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[StrengthenME@northernlight.org](mailto:StrengthenME@northernlight.org)



[www.healthylifeeap.com/  
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# Seek help

Reach out to professional resources such as clergy, medical, and behavioral health professionals.

StrengthenME and Healthy Life EAP are here for you with trainings, support groups, stress management groups, and individual support.

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