Fostering Resilience in Yourself and Others: Boundary Setting

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Core values of peer support

1) Peer support is voluntary
2) Peer supporters are hopeful
3) Peer supporters are open-minded
4) Peer supporters are empathetic
5) Peer supporters are respectful
6) Peer supporters facilitate change
7) Peer supporters are honest and direct
8) Peer support is mutual and reciprocal
9) Peer support is equally shared power
10) Peer support is strengths-focused
11) Peer support is transparent
12) Peer support is person-driven

Recovery Roles

Outreach worker
Motivator and cheerleader
Confidant
Truth-teller.
Role model and mentor
Planner
Problem-solving coach
Resource broker
Observer
Advocate
Educator
Community organizer
Lifestyle consultant/guide
Encouraging new relationships
Other roles?

Peer providers DO:

- Facilitate peer support groups
- Share their own recovery stories
- Advocate for consumers
- Act as role models of recovery
- Provide crisis support
- Communicate with clinical staff
- Act as a liaison between staff and clients
- Work on a variety of clinical teams
- Provide outreach & educate facility staff and peers about peer support services
Peer providers DO NOT:

• Provide psychotherapy
• Do other people’s jobs or fulfill other people’s roles in the facility
• Collude with client peers against clinical staff
• Cross boundaries
• Support client consumers in self destructive or illegal behaviors
• Criticize clinical staff in front of client consumers
Setting and Keeping Healthy Boundaries: *It’s complicated.*

Boundaries are involved with how we treat others, how they treat us, and how we treat ourselves.
Why are Boundaries Important?

• Demonstrates respect for others
• Promotes honesty
• Fosters trust between individuals
• Maintains safety of everyone involved
• Clarifies roles & expectations
• Boundaries create a safe space, both physically and emotionally
• And…
Appropriate boundaries allow people to form trusting relationships that help them
• Learn
• Move toward recovery
• Become more self-aware

“Boundaries involve a careful and strategic balance between providing support and setting limits.”
Boundaries are more ambiguous than ethical considerations

- The unseen lines that you won’t cross
- Undefined physical and emotional distances
- Parameters that make you unique
- Self imposed and self defined
Boundaries are Important

The level of boundary responsibility you have depends on the relationship:

- Friendship
- Work Colleague
- Client
Personal Boundaries

• Boundaries set expectations so people know how to behave around you.
• Boundaries make you feel safe and healthy.
• Boundaries make others feel safe around you.
• Boundaries help build trust.

Boundaries are clearly communicated as ‘right’ or ‘wrong.’
Personal Limits
Healthy Boundaries for Peer Recovery Specialists

• Stay within the behavioral constraints of the organization’s policies and procedures.
• Be able to articulate what constitutes taking too much responsibility for someone else’s recovery.
• Openly discuss interactions and reactions in providing peer recovery support services with supervisors.
• Devote a similar amount of time and effort to each person served while also being aware of the possibility of exceptions when necessary (e.g., a person in crisis).
• Respect your own limits by prioritizing self-care.
What Do Boundaries include?

Confidentiality
Language use
Actions
Confidentiality involves keeping others’ personal information private, with certain exceptions.
Language Use

Respectful, recovery-oriented language fosters positive relationships with others.
Actions

Promoting respect, trust, and safety in relationships
Peer Drift in the Workplace
Boundary Crossing vs Boundary Violations
Boundary Crossing

- Often ambiguous
- Occurs whenever your actions deviate from your established role as a peer support provider
- Dependent on where you are, who you are with, and the cultural backgrounds of all involved parties
- Decision-making process can be complex
Boundary Violation

Often clear-cut
Crossing creates reasonable risk of harm or exploitation of a person or people
Boundary rules apply regardless of where you are, who you are with, or anyone’s cultural background

Decision-making process difficult but is usually straightforward regarding what you should do
Boundary violations are actions or behaviors all agree are never okay. This is true whether we are a traditional service provider or a peer support provider.
What are Boundary Violations in our Work?

Work boundaries may involve issues of

- power and control,
- professional distance,
- self-disclosure,
- after-hours involvement, and friendship vs. friendly behavior.
Boundary Violations:
4 Common Elements

• Secrecy
• Role Reversal
• Indulgence of Professional Privilege
• Double Bind
Boundary Issues: Are You Helping or Are You Hurting?

- Are there any policies/rules/codes of conduct about the issue? What do they say?
- If rules exist, follow them. Be sure to learn what the policies are at the site where you are working.
- What is my supervisor’s advice? Consult your supervisor whenever possible.
- What do my gut instincts tell me to do?
- Golden rule re ethical decision making
- When in doubt…CONSULT!
- Talk with your supervisor(s) and/or talk with the director of the program where you are working as a peer support provider.
Warning Signs of Boundary Violations

• Choosing sides
• Making exceptions
• Keeping secrets
• Giving or receiving gifts
• Borrowing or lending money
• Feeling as if no one but you has interest in the client

• Feeling no one but you will be able to assist the client
• Feeling responsible for a client’s progress or failure
• “Owning” a client’s successes or failures
• Confiding personal or professional issues or troubles
Situational boundaries and ethical issues
Clear Discussion and Mutual Agreement

The role and limitations of peer support services.
An ongoing discussion.
Making Ethical Decisions:

• Is the relationship in the client’s best interest?
• Is this something that other Peer Specialists would do?
• Can this affect my objectivity in providing care?
• Will this cause confusion in my role?
• If you are still unsure try asking:
  • How would this appear to others (peers, family, colleagues and/or supervisor)?
  • How does this appear to the client?
• Is this decision making me uncomfortable?
SAMHSA’s 3 Steps

Step 1: risk of harm
Step 2: principles of recovery or core values of peer support
Step 3: policies, standards, laws

And consistent with human rights and recovery
Boundary Crossing and Boundary Violation Examples
Clear boundary violations:

• Never engage in sexual/intimate activities with the consumers they serve.
• Never accept gifts from those they serve.
• Never provide their home address to those they serve.
• Never enter into business arrangements with consumers they serve.
Problem Spots

• Time
• Location
• Gifts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Recovery Coach Behavior</th>
<th>Zone of Safety (Always OK)</th>
<th>Zone of Vulnerability (Sometimes OK)</th>
<th>Zone of Abuse (Never OK)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepting a gift</td>
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<td>Lending money</td>
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<td>Giving a hug</td>
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<td>Giving your cell phone number</td>
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<td>Using profanity</td>
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<td>Attending a recovery support meeting in the community with the person served</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hiring the person served to do work</td>
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Ethics in Peer Service Settings: Personal Checklist
The ethics of self-care

...set limits that will work in both your professional and personal life