

# Setting Boundaries Across the Board: Addressing the Caregiver Challenges for Professionals, Volunteers, Families, and Patients

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Friday, July 8, 2016

8:30 am -10 am

Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS




“Good fences make good neighbors.”

Robert Frost

# Professional Boundaries

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOHhCUWc0hw>



Having healthy personal and  
professional boundaries  
is a lifestyle,  
not a quick fix.

# Possible reasons for boundary problems:

- Personalities
- Mental disorders
- Cultural differences
- Spiritual, religious, or belief differences

(Caregiver)

# Paralyzing Causes

- Fear of hurting someone's feelings
- Fear of being abandoned or separate
- Desire to be totally dependent on another
- Fear of someone's anger
- Fear of punishment or job loss
- Fear of being shamed
- Fear of being perceived as bad or selfish

# Areas of potential boundary problems

- Caregivers giving too much personal information
- Caregivers communicating appropriately: person in need/client, family, employer?
- Caregivers discussing and determining schedules: person in need/client, family, or employer?
- Caregivers cancelling visits: notify person in need/client, family, or employer?

(Caregiver)

# Areas of potential boundary problems (con't)

- Giving ANY kind of advice including medical
- Repeated gift giving from person in need/client or family, or from caregiver to person in need/client
- Person in need/clients asking personal questions of the caregiver
- Person in need/client or family expecting visits or social time outside of the care setting

(Caregiver)

# Types of Professional Boundaries


- Personal information: share if providing encouragement or teaching by example
- Emotional reactions: normal to feel a range of feelings resulting from caregiving; avoid expressing or acting on emotions; focus on needs of person being cared for
- Nicknames/Endearments: Ask what person who is being cared for wants to be called

(Setting)

# Types of Professional Boundaries (con't)

- Tone of voice: Use a caring, calm voice
- Space: respect personal space of the person being cared for; identify ways to satisfy their need for more physical touch (e.g., massage, spa)
- Time: find ways to recharge yourself

(Setting)



Caregivers may ask themselves if they are treating this person in need/client in a different manner than others being cared for and are their emotions affecting the care given?

(Caregiver)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nENHkYV-iLI>

# Boundaries

- Ownership  
Identify who owns it
- Control  
Know who controls it
- Responsibility  
Know who's responsible for it

# Boundaries Defined

“Simply put, a boundary is a limit or space between you and the other person; a clear place where you begin and the other person ends. Think of it as a fence in your backyard. You are the gate keeper and get to decide who you let in and who you keep out, who you let into the whole back yard, or who you let just inside the gate.”

“Boundaries defined” (2015)


<https://www.ipfw.edu/affiliates/assistance/selfhelp/relationship-settingboundaries.html>

# Boundaries

- Boundaries define us
- Personal/professional space
- Keep good in; keep bad out
- Identify own responsibilities
- Give us control over our lives

# Kinds of Boundaries

- Physical: personal space and touch
- Professional: what are my job responsibilities?
- Mental: thoughts and opinions
- Psychological: emotions and self-esteem
- Social: customs of society
- Spiritual: beliefs and intuition



“Think about the instructions you get before a plane takes off. ‘If you’re traveling with a small child and the oxygen mask drops down, put the mask over your own mouth first. *Then* if you have a small child sitting next to you—or someone acting like one—place the mask on them.’ Think about how this applies to life outside the plane: No matter who depends on you, no matter who you’re responsible for, you can’t *really* take care of anyone else unless you are taking care of yourself first. (And, yes, I have to remind myself of this at least ten times a day.)”

(Williams, T. M. *Black Pain*, p. 69)

# In-bound and Out-bound Boundaries

- In-bound: Protection
- Out-bound: Containment

# Benefits of Setting and Maintaining Boundaries

- Improve sense of security, stability, predictability, and order
- Creates more relaxed, nonjudgmental atmosphere

# Boundaries Protect Us

- Love: connect and trust
- Emotions: Own personal feelings and not be controlled by others' feelings
- Values: Own life reflects deepest caring
- Behaviors: Control over personal actions
- Attitudes: Stances and opinions about yourself and others
- Professional: Stay within professional code of ethics
- Legal: Stay within the law

# Boundaries

Honest  $\neq$  Open

# Lack of Boundaries

- Loss of self: identity and lifestyle
- Spend time with wrong people
- Uncomfortable behaviors
- Avoiding others; isolating
- Doing too much
- Freedom without responsibility: “having your cake and eating it too”
- Control others with manipulation, guilt, domination, intimidation
- Inability to say “no”
- Risk professional or legal disciplinary action

# Establishing Boundaries

- Develop the skill: watch others, trial & error
- Know your emotional, physical, mental, professional, legal, spiritual limits
- HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired
- Be aware of feelings: uncomfortable feeling may indicate breach of boundary
- Communicate clearly and assertively
- Seek support
- Identify personal and professional values
- Know applicable laws
- Negotiate communal values

# Setting Boundaries for Caregivers

Assess systematically:

- Needs
- Motivations
- Resources
- Realism
- Commitment

(Importance)

# Setting Boundaries for Caregivers: Needs

- Needs vs wants
- Write down needs and frequency
- Create a chart (daily, weekly, monthly)

(Importance)

# Setting Boundaries for Caregivers: Motivations

- Wrong reasons:
  - Effort to earn praise, respect, love
  - May result in: sense of resentment, fatigue, anger, and a sense of helplessness
  - Guilt, reparations, appearances
- Right reason:
  - Love
  - Professional and legal guidelines

(Importance)

# Setting Boundaries for Caregivers: Motivations (con't)

- You can't do it alone
- Ask for help early & often
  - Family, friends, community resources
  - Make sure things are done
  - Allow others to do things their own way
  - Communicate with each other

(Importance)

# Setting Boundaries for Caregivers: Realism

- Assess what **only** you can do
- Identify caregivers who can satisfy the other needs and talk with them about it
- If possible, discuss the list with the person being cared for

(Importance)

# Setting Boundaries for Caregivers: Commitment

- Recognize that your time, your energy, your health, and your relationships are as deserving of a commitment of caring as your loved one is.
- Learn to say “No” without explanation
- Trade responsibilities rather than taking on more
- Be aware of own limits
- Avoid guilt
- Avoid comparisons with others

(Importance)

# Maintaining Boundaries

- Words
- Body language (e.g., posturing, hand signals, facial expressions)
- Behavior (e.g., stepping forward, moving back, leaving the area)

# Words

- No
- I disagree
- I will not
- I choose not to
- Stop that
- It hurts
- It's wrong
- That's bad
- I don't like it when you touch me there

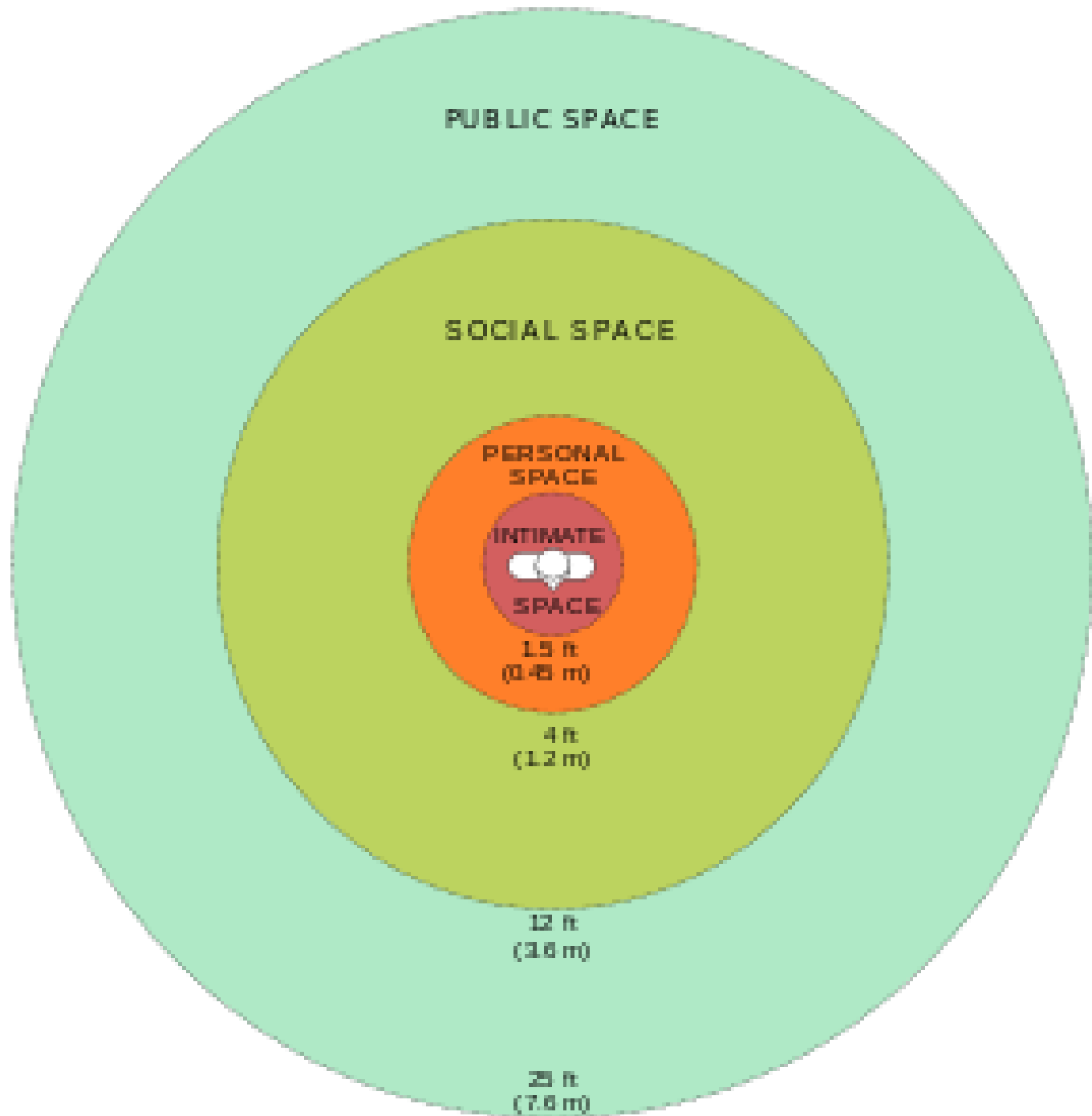
# Comfort Zone

- Space where one experiences low anxiety and stress



# Personal Space

Edward T. Hall's personal reaction bubbles



# Determinants of Personal Space

- Social status
- Professional status
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Country of origin
- Geographic region
- Environmental conditions (e.g., public transport, public events)

# Other Personal Boundaries

- Personal distance: distance between two or more individuals
- Social distance: communication distance
- Critical distance: attack boundary
- Escape distance: move away from disturbing sound or event
- Alert distance: become more conscious of surroundings
- Flight distance: run boundary

(Heini Heddiger, Swiss zoologist)

# Relationships

Dilemma: set a boundary and risk losing a relationship/job

Failing to set limits keeps us a prisoner of others' wishes

# Relationship Boundaries

Know and respect each other's

- Goals
- Fears
- Limits
- Wants



# Relationship Boundaries (con't)

Know and respect each other's  
boundaries in order **to feel safe**

# Environmental Boundaries

Everybody needs their own space, no matter how big it is

- A chair
- A shelf
- A room

# Digital Boundaries

- Identify personal/professional boundaries
- Communicate to others
- Know and respect boundaries in order to feel safe

# Digital Boundaries (con't)

- Negotiate digital communication for relationship
  - Use each other's devices
  - Communicate by e-mail
  - Call at work; outside of certain hours
  - Connect on Facebook/LinkedIn
  - Tweet activities

# Resources

- Barrett Values Center. *Personal values assessment* <http://www.valuescentre.com/pva/>
- Caregiver and client boundaries.(2014). <http://caringcompanion.net/services/home-care-companions/19-caring-companion/356-caregiver-and-client-boundaries>
- Childers, M. (2015). *Boundaries for everyday life*. <https://childerscounselingservice.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Boundaries-for-Everyday.pdf>
- Cloud, H., & Townsend, J. Books, sound recordings, YouTube videos and other materials.
- Gruberg, A. *The only rule is “There Are No Rules”*: *Boundaries and Caregiving*.  
<http://thecaregiverspace.org/rule-rules-boundaries-caregiving/>
- Importance of personal boundaries. <http://www.careconscious.com/resources/importance-personal-boundaries-1>
- Resilient caregiver: Setting limits for healthful caregiving*.  
<http://www.darts1.org/sites/darts1.org/files/ResilientCgvr06-30-11.pdf>
- Setting professional boundaries <https://sites.google.com/site/vacgroleandresp/helpful-tips-for-the-caregiver/setting-professional-boundaries>
- Sollitto, M. *How to say 'No' to caregiving*  
<https://www.agingcare.com/Articles/saying-no-to-being-a-caregiver-to-relieve-stress-146991.htm>
- Williams, T. M. (2008). *Black pain: It just looks like we're not hurting*. New York: Scribner.

# Additional Resources

- Age Positive Conference handout: <http://www.marc.org/Community/KC-Communities-for-All-Ages/About/Events/Age-Positive-Conference>
- Area Agency on Aging <http://www.n4a.org/>
- Care Connection (Shepherd's Center of Central KC) <http://sccentral.org/caregiver-institute/>
- Care for the Family Caregiver (White House Conference on Aging 2005) <http://www.caregiving.org/pdf/resources/CFC.pdf>
- Caregiver Stress on KKFI Everywoman <http://www.kkfi.org/program-episodes/caregiver-stress/>
- Caregiver Support Groups <http://sccentral.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Caregiver-Support-groups.pdf>

# Additional Resources (con't)

- Create Your Caregiving Team  
<http://www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-12-2011/set-up-caregiving-team.html>
- Eldercare Locator <http://www.eldercare.gov/>
- Family Care Navigator <https://www.caregiver.org/>
- Grief Support Network <http://griefsupportnetwork.org/>
- Home Health Compare <https://www.medicare.gov/homehealthcompare/>
- KCPT Caregiver Support  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/caringformomanddad/resources/>
- Medlineplus.gov
- Pubmed.gov



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