Boundaries:
Good Fences Make Good Neighbors – Or Do They?

Pine Tree Hospice Volunteer Team Meeting
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Boundaries

“The caregiver/patient relationship must incorporate healthy boundaries that allow all parties to live as individuals.”

Wegenast, S. (2014)
Boundaries

- Mutually understood physical and emotional limits of the relationship between the patient and the volunteer
- Give both the volunteer and families a range of acceptable behaviors.
Why are boundaries important?
Why are boundaries important?

- Vulnerable families
- In their homes
- Represent PT Hospice (part of a team)
- Provide a service
- Not friends
Who are boundaries for?

What good do they do?

What can happen if boundaries are crossed?
Who?

- Both the client and the volunteer! Sets the parameters of the relationship.
Good

- **Defines the role** and preserves identity of both the client and the volunteer
  - fine line between being a friend and being a member of the formal caregiving team
- **Preserves relationship** – know what to expect
- **Provides guidance** (when to say “yes” and when to say “no” to a patient’s or family’s request)
- **Safety and security** in knowing where the boundaries are
- **Fosters autonomy**, not dependence
  - Respects and honors autonomy and life/turf of the client
  - Gives space for client and family to care for themselves
- **Self Care** (care for self allows you to care for others)
  - “The love and responsibility are admirable traits, but how long can the patient feel better” at the caregiver’s expense? Caregivers must direct that love and responsibility to their own well-being first. You are not abandoning them. You are caring for them better by strengthening their main support system—you yourself.” Wegenast, S. (2014)
Where’s the Harm?

- Power Imbalance (client is vulnerable)
- Fosters dependency
- Burn out (of caregiver and of the relationship)
- Enmeshment
- Unrealistic expectations
- Reflects on the whole organization
- Slippery slope – one crossing leads to another … rationalize
- Legal issues
Common Boundary Concerns


- accepting money from, or lending money to, a patient or family
- accepting a patient’s power of attorney or signing a patient’s will
- lending personal belongings to a patient/family
- attempting a deathbed conversion
- providing medical care to a patient
- gossiping about other members of the formal caregiving team.
- accepting a gift from, or buying a gift for, a patient or family member
- attending a patient’s medical appointments
- breaking down emotionally in front of a patient or family member.
- giving out personal phone numbers
- accepting an invitation from a patient or family to attend a family activity or party
- continuing to visit with a family following the patient’s death
- providing clothes, toys or meals to a patient or family
- staying with a patient or family for longer than the agreed time
- sharing private information about their personal experiences with the death of a loved one
PT Hospice Boundaries

- What are some of your boundaries?
- What boundaries are unclear for you?
How do you know when you have crossed a boundary? What do you do?

- Ask yourself:
  - Whose need is it?
  - Is this in the best interest of this client?
  - Does this fit with Pine Tree Hospice policies?
  - Is it my role?
  - Does it foster dependency on me?
  - Would other volunteers do the same?

- Consult!!!! Seek Supervision!!

Above all: Do good  Do no harm
“Saying “no” isn't cruel; rather it implements healthy boundaries.”

(Wegencast, S., 2014)
References
