



## ***Healthy Hints...***

### **Thoughts on boundaries for rostered professionals**

#### **PLACES**

- Counseling and meetings should be in an official room and other church employees or volunteers should be nearby.
- More than one adult should be present during home visits.
- Lunch and dinner meeting should be in a very public location. The meeting should have a definite purpose or agenda.

#### **MONEY**

- Loaning money to a parishioner or borrowing money from a parishioner could be a problem.
- Church professionals should not review the giving records of their parishioners.

#### **GIFTS**

- Giving or receiving gifts can be troublesome, especially expensive personal gifts.
- Asking for a favor is asking for a gift; it may imply a personal involvement that is not intended.

#### **CLOTHING**

- Dress appropriately for the occasion.
- Think about accepted community and denomination norms.

#### **LANGUAGE**

- Don't use intimate language.
- Tone of voice, like body language, is important.
- Avoid creating an atmosphere of affection.
- Choose words carefully.
- Be careful about self-disclosure. Too much openness may imply an improper level of intimacy.
- The use of one's first name may be a problem. Some people have a problem with clergy using their first names without including a title such as sister or pastor.

#### **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

- A handshake is the safest, while hugging can be a problem. Using a hug on every occasion may make a parishioner who has been abused very uncomfortable.
- Sometimes hugging may be appropriate. Think about the occasion, the people, and how you feel.
- Keep in mind whose needs are being met.

Adapted from: Good Shepherd Church Renewal Center "Boundaries."

### **Church Boundary Issues:**

- 1) History of past misconduct either known or unknown; boundaries are blurred; congregants are suspicious of or controlling of clergy.
- 2) Unequal balance of power in congregation; leadership controls everything, including money available to pastor; pastor's schedule; challenging pastor's personal boundaries or pastor makes all decisions; leadership is weak; indifferent; and there are very few programs.

### **Symptoms of the pastor on the "slippery slope":**

- 1) Pastor works 24/7; does everything; no delegating or not in his/her office; no clear schedule; late for meetings; no clear record of pastoral work.
- 2) No cluster meetings, spiritual director, therapist, or friends outside of the congregation.
- 3) Poor management of counseling; long sessions and/or too many; same individuals; becoming too close to certain people; no one else at church; no glass in doors and door always closed.
- 4) Spends too much time with office staff, music staff, or volunteers.
- 5) Family relationships ignored; church is "whole life"; no certain time off; drops everything when someone calls; no recreation or other self-care.
- 6) Evidence of substance abuse; depression; using pulpit to get needs met; indifference; lack of vitality; burn out; no interest in continuing education.
- 7) Too personal; too "huggy"; touchy; questionable language and humor; unprofessional dress; shares too much of personal life; dating congregants; needs congregants to care for him/her; not careful about home visits.
- 8) Time with young people; acting their ages; talking about their personal lives; too touchy; overuse of social network sites, such as, MySpace and Facebook.
- 9) Too much time on computer; possible history of pornography on church computer; accessible to young people.
- 10) Rumors exist; not really clear; jealousy among congregants; conflicts surface which didn't exist before; problems with finances or giving; expectations not met or too unrealistic.

# Sexual Harassment

**Sexual Harassment** is determined by the impact of the behavior on the recipient NOT the intention of the actor. To some people hugs of friendship may seem like hugs of intimacy. (Uninvited hugs—even when passing the peace—may be experienced as a boundary violation by some people.)

## Verbal Harassment

Ask: Does the recipient feel uncomfortable or threatened?

- Sexual language or comments – explicit
- Using nicknames with sexual connotations (hunk, babe, doll, etc.)
- Telling sexual jokes or stories
- Spreading rumors, talking or asking questions about a person's sex life
- Sexual comments about a person's anatomy or clothing

## Non-Verbal Harassment

Ask: Does the recipient feel uncomfortable or threatened?

- Staring at someone
- Facial expressions (winking, throwing kisses, etc.)
- Displaying sexually aggressive visual materials such as calendars of nude, semi-nude, and/or provocatively posed females or males
- Making sexual gestures with hands or body movements

## Physical Harassment

Ask: Does the recipient feel uncomfortable or threatened?

- An unwanted massage of shoulders, back, or neck
- Touching hair, clothing, or body
- Brushing up against someone
- Prolonged hugs, especially with hands moving down the back or pelvic contact

## Myths

- Victims “ask for it” through behavior or clothing style
- Only women are sexually harassed
- Sexual harassment more frequent in blue collar than in white collar environments
- Men and women agree on what type of behavior constitutes sexual harassment
- If there are no complaints, there are not problems

## When is it sexual harassment?

- Would you say/do the same thing if your spouse or significant partner were nearby?
- Is the behavior unwelcome and personally directed?
- Offensive, insulting, and/ or hurtful behavior or comments may be considered harassment regardless of the intention of the actor – AND even if the receiver seems to be “going along” with the behavior.

## Sexualized behavior is ...

Ethically Neutral –  
That is, it is neither  
Good or Bad

Ethical or Unethical  
Appropriate or Inappropriate

...depending upon the particulars of the relationship: specifically the balance of power.

### Examples of Sexualized Behavior:

#### Verbal Behavior

1. Risqué jokes, sexual humor
2. Revelations of, or inquiries about, the intimate details of one's personal life
3. Inviting someone to share an experience involving nudity, such as a hot tub, massage, or swimming at a nude beach
4. Sexual innuendo
5. Teasing
6. Bids of sympathy about one's partner's sexual inadequacies
7. Request (direct or indirect) for active assistance with one's own sexual inadequacies or problems
8. Suggestive comments about appearance, dress, or body shape / size / capacities
9. Tales of sexual exploits / experiences

#### Non-Verbal (Physical) Behavior:

1. Cornering someone and leaning against him or her
2. A prolonged hug, when hugging is the customary behavior; or pressing up against someone's body during a hug
3. Kissing on the lips, when kissing on the cheeks would be a customary gesture
4. Sending someone a condom in a greeting card
5. Rearranging one's schedule so as to be with someone
6. Dancing sensually with someone
7. Giving someone a gift of lingerie
8. Fondling or caressing
9. Prolonged gazes; insistent visual contact
10. Tickling and playful aggression – e.g. wrestling
11. "Accidental" contact with sexual areas of the body – e.g. reaching across someone and bumping across or brushing his or her breast, genitals, buttocks, things

**BOUNDARY BASICS FOR CLERGY AND SPIRITUAL TEACHERS**

*Handout for Video 2*

**Dating**

Pastors/Rabbis/Teachers who are single must often decide whether to date someone in their congregations/sangha. It is, after all, a place to meet someone with similar values and commitments. To date a congregant, however, introduces myriad complications and opportunities for misunderstandings.

If you find yourself attracted to a member of your congregation/sangha, consider doing the following:

- Inform him/her that you cannot be his/her spiritual leader and have a romantic involvement. Therefore, if the person wants to pursue a dating relationship, he/she should find someone else to serve as spiritual leader.
- Tell your governing body and supervisor about the relationship.

**Friends**

Choosing friends from among those one serves and leaders also has complications. There is a difference between being friendly and being a close friend who shares confidences. It is better to find friends among colleagues and through organizations that promote your values and interests. However, if you develop a close friendship with a congregant, consider the following:

- Discuss the difficulty of being both spiritual leader and friend;
- Avoid discussion the business of the congregation/sangha with him/her; and
- Avoid spending time together at congregational/sangha events.

**Dual relationships**

Dual relationship are those in which the spiritual leader has more than one role, for example, if the rabbi is also a client or patient of a congregant. However, if the best person for a specific responsibility is in your congregation/sangha and you choose a dual relationship, consider the following:

- Minimize the number of dual relationships;
- Have a clear understanding with the person involved about what is expected, a contract perhaps; and
- If problems develop, seek a solution with the help of your bishop/supervisor.

(Note: Living in a small town or rural setting increases the difficult in finding suitable individuals for dating or friendship. Avoiding other dual relationships is also difficult.)

**Gifts**

Where is the line between what is appropriate to accept and what is not appropriate? When presented with gifts, consider the following:

- Let your common sense guide you;
- Be certain you are not expected to do something in return;
- Accept appropriate gifts with a heart-felt thank you;
- Set a dollar limit; ((For Buddhist teachers in traditions where *dana* from students is an accepted form of ongoing financial support, be careful not to develop preferences for students offering larger gifts); and
- Find a way to graciously decline gifts that are inappropriate.

## **A SACRED TRUST**

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Video Three

### **BOUNDARY BASICS FOR CLERGY AND SPIRITUAL TEACHERS**

Handout for Video 3

A respect for boundaries protects relationships in which one individual has more power than the other. Four areas in which an understanding of boundaries is essential are 1) the pulpit, 2) transference, 3) touching and hugging, and 4) intimacy.

#### **The pulpit**

The pulpit is a tool that can be used for positive or negative ends.

Negative ends include

- Furthering our own agenda, as when there's conflict within the congregation/sangha;
- Promoting ourselves, as in drawing attention to our keen minds or smooth delivery.

When we give in to those temptations, we are inappropriately crossing boundaries.

#### **Transference**

Transference is confusing feelings one has about one person with feelings for another; for example, confusing the spiritual leader with an old girlfriend or with the warm, generous father. In this confusion, the congregant may bring the baggage from that earlier relationship to the pastoral or teaching relationship.

We need to be aware that

- A congregant's/student's interaction with us is often not about us;
- We aren't as wonderful or as terrible as the congregant thinks we are;
- Praise for our leadership, preaching, or teaching is not a sexual come-on;
- Dynamics of transference make congregants/students more vulnerable.

When we use a transference attachment for our own gratification we are inappropriately stepping over a boundary.

#### **Hugging and Touch Boundaries**

Sometimes we think congregants need our touch. They may even ask for it.

We need to consider

- Is this a transference situation?
- Would touch be in their best interests or is it about our needs?
- Is there a better way to convey warmth and caring?

While touch is an important part of pastoral care, hugging or touching a congregant/student can be inappropriate boundary crossing.

#### **Understanding Intimacy**

*Spirituality* can be described as the "intimate connection between ourselves and God," and *sexual activity* as the "intimate connection between ourselves and another person." Sometimes these intimacies become confused for both the congregant and spiritual leader.

Sexual sharing is one of the gifts of God's creation. However, sexual contact with a congregant/student is clearly inappropriate boundary crossing and has the potential of doing great harm.

**ELEVEN GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVING BOUNDARIES:  
INDIVIDUAL AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTH**

*Handout 2 for Video 4*

- 1. To counsel or not to counsel**
  - Do not attempt counseling unless you are trained as a counselor.
  - Do not attempt to counsel victims, survivors, or abusers without special training in this area. REFER, REFER, REFER.
- 2. If you do decide to counsel, set limits.**
  - Avoid counseling in any setting that might suggest dating or other social interaction.
  - Limit the length and number of sessions – in advance.
- 3. Sexual feelings**
  - Be aware of any sexual feelings, vis-à-vis congregants, clients, employees, students, staff, etc. (Expect to have these feelings.)
  - Acknowledge these feelings to yourself, to a supervisor, and/or in consultation session – not to the individual who is the object of those feelings, nor to any other congregant/staff member.
- 4. Sexualized behavior**
  - Do not attempt to sexualize any professional relationship.
  - If a congregant/staff member engages in sexualized behavior towards you, do not respond in kind. Rather maintain your role as spiritual leader and consult with a colleague, consultant, or supervisor.
- 5. Stress management and self-care**
  - Provide for your own physical, psychological, and spiritual self-care with recreational times, time off to care for self or family, retreats, education leave, etc.
  - As a check to see whether you are doing this, list activities you engage in outside your congregation. (Institutions have an obligation to support individuals' self-care efforts through financial support and generous leave policies.)
- 6. Dual relationships**
  - Do not enter into a dual relationship in which you are both spiritual leader and lover/partner to a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, etc. If, nonetheless, you and one of the persons agree to pursue an intimate relationship, end your role as spiritual leader.
  - Try to avoid dual relationships with congregants, clients, employees, students, staff, etc., in which you relate to an individual in two capacities.
  - Try to avoid dual relationships in which you are both spiritual leader and friend.
  - If a dual relationship is unavoidable (e.g., if you work in a small community, if you supervise employees and serve as their spiritual leader, if you are a priest in a seminary where you also teach), discuss the inherent problems and possible consequences with the individual(s) involved, establish whatever boundaries you can to limit the duality, mutually decide upon strategies for protecting the relationship you have as the other's spiritual leader, and be open about the duality.
- 7. Personal relationships and intimacy needs**
  - Attend to your personal and familial relationships. Maintain and nurture them.
  - As a check, list the relationships you have with people who are not members of your congregation/sangha.
- 8. Avoiding workaholicism and burnout.**
  - Be clear about your job description and the accompanying expectations. (Obviously, institutions must take the first step by providing job descriptions and specifying expectations.)
  - When you encounter situations beyond your expertise, consult and refer. If your workload seems unreasonable or unmanageable, discuss this with a supervisor or consultant and see what can be done.

**9. Supervision and evaluation**

- Ask a supervisor to meet with you periodically to review your position and work, if your supervisor does not do this on his/her own initiative.

**10. Avoiding isolation**

- Maintain contacts with colleagues.
- Consult regularly.

**11. Spiritual practice**

- Engage in regular prayer and meditation.

Adapted from *Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship: Workshop Manual*, Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Seattle: 1992. Used with permission.

# What Needs do Individual Parishioners Bring to the Pastor ?

- Hope for assurance of God's forgiveness in the wake of a serious transgression.
- Spiritual direction in time of doubt, crisis and isolation.
- Guidance in making significant decisions, perhaps about continuing an unplanned pregnancy or working through serious conflict in a marriage.
- A young widow struggling with her feelings of attraction to a man and her sense of guilt about betraying the memory of her late husband.
- Encouragement and support in the care of elderly and infirm parents.
- Guidance in raising teenagers who seem to be drifting away from mom and dad and the values of their childhood.
- Help in sorting through the issues of childhood sexual abuse and current domestic abuse, gathering courage to leave the relationship.
- Confusion about one's sexual orientation; concern about the teaching of the church.
- Social isolation, loneliness, disappointment in relationships, work, and family life.
- Needs to be needed, to be involved, and to be a vital and important part of the community.
- Need for leadership by the pastor in community efforts to establish a safe haven from gangs and drug dealers.
- Careful attention to the moral questions raised by the parishioner's teenagers. Communion preparation of parishioner's grade-school-age children.

# Types of Abusive Ministers

Clergy sexual misconduct takes many forms: voyeurism, exhibitionism, incest, child molestation, homosexual liaisons, and rape. Clergy sexual abuse usually begins with acts or statements intended to arouse erotic interest, sometimes including harassment. When pastoral power is used to manipulate a congregant to engage in sex relations, the results are devastating.

What type of minister becomes involved sexually with a church member? A *Newsweek* article provided a profile of a minister who strays. He is usually middle-aged, disillusioned with this calling, neglecting his own marriage, and a lone ranger who is isolated from his clerical colleagues. His failure commenced when he met a woman who needed him.

There are many ways to classify abusers. Observers of clergy abuse list as many as seven profiles. Marie Fortune has made a major distinction between *predators* and *wanderers*, to which may be added a third type, the lover.

**The predator** is a person acting as God's representative who actively seeks opportunities to abuse women sexually. Targeting his prey, the predator pretends to be a caring pastor, using his power and position to manipulate his victims. The pastoral predator is "manipulative, coercive, controlling, predatory, and sometimes violent. He may also be charming, bright, competent, and charismatic. He is attracted to powerlessness and vulnerability. He is not psychotic, but is usually sociopathic; that is, he has little or no sense of conscience about his offending behaviors. He usually will minimize, lie, and deny when confronted. For these offenders, the ministry presents an ideal opportunity for access to possible victims of all ages.

In contrast to the predator, **the Wanderer** is not violent, not premeditative in his sexual abuse, and generally less successful personally and professionally. Because he is a vulnerable and inadequate person, the wanderer easily becomes emotionally and sexually involved with a congregant or counselee. According to Fortune, the wanderer "has difficulty maintaining boundaries in relationships and attempts to meet private needs in public arenas." The catalyst for his sexual misbehavior is usually an equally needy woman who holds her minister in high regard, almost to the point of adoration.

The growing intimacy between pastor and parishioner usually culminates in an emotional moment when inhibitions are cast aside and the two engage in an episode of sexual intercourse. Once the passions have subsided, both begin to feel anxiety, shame, guilt, and a sense of betrayal. The two express regret and swear themselves to secrecy. Although things may seem to return to normal, a trust has been violated and a shadow falls over their lives and relationships.

**The Lover** is another minister who enters the forbidden zone with a parishioner. This spiritual shepherd becomes infatuated with one of his flock. Though a sexual transgressor like the other two, he is motivated neither by the desire to conquer nor the need to overcome personal inadequacies. Whether single or married, the minister knows a sex relationship with a church member is wrong and tries to guard against inappropriate behavior.

Although there is no stereotypical perpetrator of clergy sexual abuse, the distinction between predator, wanderer and lover is insightful. The predator offender moves from conquest to conquest, leaving a trail of victims. The wanderer minister yields to temptation in a moment of crisis and immediately feels remorse over his failure. The romantic minister is drawn to a church member when his passion convinces him he is in love.

Clergy sexual abuse raises many other important questions. What is its impact on victims and churches? How can sexual abuse be prevented? Is restoration possible for fallen ministers? How should churches and denominations respond? What are the legal implications? The ethical problem is many-sided. Understanding the issue is vital, but it is only the beginning.

**Aren't there some "victims" who really ask for it?  
Isn't it true that clergy just get seduced sometimes?  
Whose fault is it then?**

When allegations of sexual misconduct surface, there is often an immediate urge to find someone to blame. This is a very human response to a disturbing and difficult situation, but it doesn't help much in resolving things. Identifying a culprit is not the same thing as dealing with the problem.

There have been cases, fewer than offenders would claim, but it has happened, in which the congregant initiated sexual contact. Even so, it is always the professional responsibility of the cleric to have no sexual contact with congregants, no matter whose idea it is. A woman who wears revealing clothing into the minister's office and, once there, begins to remove it in a sexually inviting manner may be indeed asking for something, but a responsible minister can and will respond by declining the invitation. "Put your clothes on and let's talk about what's going on here," is an obvious response. Aren't clergy the ones who are supposed to help us figure out how to live lives not run by our hormones?

Assessing the damage done by a sexual involvement can be difficult when accusations are flying. It is easy for everyone involved to be confused about who was harmed and how. It is important to remember that in general, the one with more power is more accountable, and that victims and offenders both tend to distort the interpretation of the events in the opposite direction. That is, offenders and victims will both tend to tell the story as if it is the victim's fault, even when the responsibility is clearly the offender's.

Sex offenders in general have a trouble empathizing with the pain of their victims; the overwhelming tendency is to minimize the harm done, to believe that the victim wanted or enjoyed or deserved it, even when this is clearly not the case. Victims, like was, have a lot of reasons, including their own safety, for minimizing the harm done to them. If you let yourself know how much it hurt, your world becomes a lot more scary and out of control. Both victim and offender, then, may need some time and psychological healing before they fully understand the effects of the incident. Therefore, any claim that "she was asking for it" or "it didn't hurt" is automatically suspect.

The pertinent question is not so much who started it, who did the seducing, who made the first move; the real question is, who stands to be hurt more, and who has the responsibility and the power to maintain the safety and integrity of the relationship. If a three-year-old wants to play ball in the street, it is the parent's job, not the child's to foresee the danger and set the limits. If a patient demands surgery that is risky and unnecessary, it is the doctor's job, not the patient's, to advise against it. If a seventh grader asks a camp counselor to supply alcohol for a party, it is the counselor's job to say no. If congregants pressured their pastor to embezzle funds, preach orally offensive homilies, spend Sundays at the golf course instead of the church, would we say, "Well, it's not the pastor's fault - they made him do it?" Clergy can and should keep relationships with congregants from becoming sexual.

# Crossing Intimacy Boundaries

## 1. Time Together Alone (in person or on the phone)

- Increases personal bonding and sense of specialness in the relationship. (Sets the stage for deeper communication.)
- Probably has taken some planning. (May include meeting at unusual, secretive locations and/or undue anticipation of future visits, including rearrangement of one's schedule.)
- Increases the awareness of the need to avoid attracting attention.
- Often includes attention to clothing or appearance around the "special" individual.

Often intervention by a colleague is very helpful at this point, along with spiritual direction and professional supervision.

## 2. Meeting Intimacy Needs

(Including excessive self-disclosure and availability, including giving or receiving gifts.)

- Is fraught with denial as the professional feels the freedom of setting aside professional boundaries for a "truer" or "deeper" relationship with a parishioner.
- Allows the professional to meet his or her own needs.
- Involves the professional sharing deeply private material with the parishioner and increasing the feeling of specialness in the relationship.
- Is often apparent when professional divulges pastoral confidentialities or volatile congregational information. (Or keeps secrets beyond the requirements of professional confidentiality.)

At this point, counseling and professional supervision is highly recommended.

## 3. Freedom to Touch

- Moves verbal intimacy to the freedom of touching one another. (May be explained away as "innocent.")
- Escalates the relationship and rationalization for it dramatically.

At this point, the denomination usually intervenes.

Outline adapted from information in "Pastoral Aids," Episcopal Office of Pastoral Development © 2004,  
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# Self Care for Religious Professionals

1. **Clarify your job description** and accompanying expectations. Refer and consult.
2. **Maintain clearly-expressed boundaries.** (regarding intimacies, schedule, professional role, etc.)
  - Discuss them with the colleagues, administration, Dean or Council.
  - Discuss them with your spouse or partner.
  - Take time for your family.
3. **Know when to say "NO."**
  - Prioritize your time and tasks.
  - Recognize that you can't be everything to everyone.
4. **Prepare yourself for stressful event.**  
(As the Baptists say, be "prayed up.")
5. **Maintain regular spiritual disciplines.**  
Such as retreats, journaling, and other self-reflection. At least once a month, work with a professional spiritual director.
6. **Create opportunities for genuine support.**
  - Monitor your intimacy needs.

- Avoid isolation.
  - Find friendships outside the congregation.
  - Maintain collegial contacts.
7. **Create regular times for solitude.**  
(More than singing in the shower.)
  8. **Receive regular professional supervision.**  
(Similar to what therapists receive for their practice.)
  9. **Invest in your healing and wholeness.**
  10. **Broaden your interests and vision beyond the immediate church.**  
Read and/or use study leave for topics unrelated to your most commune responsibilities.
  11. **Play ... and keep your sense of humor.**

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## **A Dozen Discernment Questions you might ask in a pastoral situation**

### **EDUCATION-CHECK**

1. Does the congregation understand my role?

### **PROFESSIONAL / PASTORAL CHECK**

2. What are professional / pastoral expectations, boundaries / limits, guidelines, etc. which might affect my response in this situation?
3. Am I aware of the effects of transference and power inherent in my professional / pastoral role?
4. Do I have professional supervision or access to a consultant to discuss this situation?

### **PROCESS CHECK**

5. Have I resolved the Who, What, When, Where, and How questions?
  - a. WHO? Am I the appropriate person to respond (or should a deacon, a woman/man, etc.)? If I am, should I have someone with me?
  - b. WHAT is the issue? Have I asked enough questions to correctly discern the parishioner's needs and resources in this situation?
  - c. WHEN? Does this situation merit an emergency response or a scheduled appointment in the near future?
  - d. WHERE? Should the parishioner come to my office instead of my going to the home? Would the parishioner and I be in the office/building alone? Does the design of my office portray an appropriate atmosphere?
  - e. HOW? If this involves counseling, how many sessions do I offer? Am I comfortable referring this person to another professional?

### **SELF CHECK**

6. What is my psycho-sexual history of woundedness? How have I addresses it?
7. What are my ego (emotional / sexual) needs? What is my motivation in responding?
8. How do I monitor my feelings and/or fantasies, especially concerning inappropriate individuals / desires?
9. What are my personal risks?
10. How do I take care of my self? Am I meeting my personal needs outside of my pastoral role?
11. Are my personal and intimate relationships solid and appropriate

### **SPIRIT CHECK**

12. Where is the Spirit in this particular interaction?

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