

Professional Boundaries for Caregivers

Type of Boundary Crossing	Staying In-bounds
<p>Sharing personal information: It may be tempting to talk to your client about your personal life or problems. Doing so may cause the client to see you as a friend instead of seeing you as a health care professional. As a result, the client may take on your worries as well as their own.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use caution when talking to a client about your personal life • Do not share information because you need to talk, or to help you feel better • Remember that your relationship with your client must be therapeutic, not social
<p>Not seeing behavior as symptomatic: Sometimes caregivers react emotionally to the actions of a client and forget those actions are caused by a disorder or disease (symptomatic). Personal emotional responses can cause a caregiver to lose sight of her role or miss important information from a client. In a worst case, it can lead to abuse or neglect of a client.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware that a client’s behavior may be the result of a disease or disorder • Know the client’s care plan • If you are about to respond emotionally or reflexively to the negative behavior of a client, step back and re-approach the client later. • Note that the client may think his action is the best way to solve a problem or fill a need • Ask yourself if there is a way to help the client communicate or react differently
<p>Nicknames/Endearments: Calling a client “sweetie” or “honey” may be comforting to that client or it might suggest a more personal interest than you intend. It might also point out that you favor one client over another. Some clients may find the use of nicknames or endearments offensive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid using terms like “sweetie” or “honey” • Ask your client how they would like to be addressed. Some may allow you to use their first name. Others might prefer a more formal approach: Mr., Mrs., Ms, or Miss • Remember that the way you address a client indicates your level of professionalism
<p>Touch: Touch is a powerful tool. It can be healing and comforting or it can be confusing, hurtful, or unwelcome. Touch should be used sparingly and thoughtfully.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use touch only when it serves the needs of the client and not your own • Ask your client if he/she is comfortable with your touch • Be aware that a client may react differently to touch than you intend
<p>Unprofessional demeanor: Demeanor includes appearance, tone and volume of voice, speech patterns, body language, etc. Your professional demeanor affects how others perceive you. Personal and professional demeanor may be different.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loud voices or fast talk may frighten or confuse clients • Good personal hygiene is a top priority due to close proximity to clients • Professional attire sends the message that you are serious about your job • Off-color jokes, racial slurs, profanity are never appropriate • Body language, facial expressions speak volumes to clients

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<p>Gifts/Tips/Favors: Giving or receiving gifts, or doing special favors, can blur the line between a personal relationship and a professional one. Accepting a gift from a client might be taken as fraud or theft by another person or family member.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow your facility’s policy on gifts • Practice saying no graciously to a resident who offers a gift that is outside your facility’s boundaries • It’s ok to tell clients you are not allowed to accept gifts, tips • To protect yourself, report offers of unusual or large gifts to your supervisor
<p>Over-involvement: Signs may include spending inappropriate amounts of time with a particular client, visiting the client when off duty, trading assignments to be with the client, thinking you are the only caregiver who can meet the client’s needs. Under-involvement is the opposite of over-involvement and may include disinterest and neglect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the needs of those in your care, rather than personalities • Don’t confuse the needs of the client with your own needs • Maintain a helpful relationship, treating each client with the same quality of care and attention, regardless of your emotional reaction to the client • Ask yourself: Are you becoming overly involved with the client’s personal life? If so, discuss your feelings with your supervisor
<p>Romantic or Sexual Relationships: A caregiver is never permitted to have a romantic or sexual relationship with a client. In most cases, sexual contact with a client is a crime in Wisconsin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it may be normal to be attracted to someone in your care, know that it is never appropriate to act on that attraction • Do not tell sexually-oriented jokes or stories. It may send the wrong message to your client • Discourage flirting or suggestive behavior by your client • If you feel that you are becoming attracted to someone in your care, seek help from your supervisor or other trusted professional right away
<p>Secrets: Secrets between you and a client are different than client confidentiality. Confidential information is shared with a few others members of a team providing care to a resident. Personal secrets compromise role boundaries and can result in abuse or neglect of a client.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not keep personal or health-related secrets with a client • Remember that your role is to accurately report any changes in your client’s condition