World Massage Conference Presents:

Crossing The Client / Therapist Boundary
with Cherie Sohnen-Moe & Ben Benjamin

Instructors

Cherie Sohnen-Moe
Ben Benjamin, PhD

The Ethics of Touch

Thank You
Goal

Improve the therapeutic relationship
By increasing awareness and understanding of boundaries.

Understanding Boundaries

Boundary Clarification Exercise

Draw a line from each word to the bubble that best corresponds to that concept.
What are the different types of boundaries?

How do we create, manage & change boundaries?

What are boundaries?

Types of Boundaries

Physical
Emotional
Intellectual
Sexual
Energetic

Relationship Boundaries

- Separate one person from another
- Protect Integrity
- Generally Unseen
- Ever-changing
- Attitudes
- Sensitivity
The Physical Boundary

The Emotional Boundary

The Intellectual Boundary
Boundary Models

Fritz Perls

Personal Boundaries

Permeable | Semi-permeable | Rigid

Personal Boundaries

Permeable
Interactive Boundaries

Boundary Change Agents

• Location of Service
• Interpersonal Space
• Appearance
• Self-Disclosure
• Language
• Touch
• Time
• Money
Boundary Change Agents

Therapeutic Relationships

- Client Centered
- Fiduciary Relationship
- Structure
- Roles
- Power Differential
- Safety

The Power Differential
The Practitioner’s Role

Every action the practitioner takes is in the service of the client’s needs – not the practitioner’s needs.

The Client’s Role

• Every action the practitioner takes is in the service of the client’s needs – not the practitioner’s needs.
• The client has voice in the process and must agree to the course of treatment for it to proceed.
The Client’s Role

• Every action the practitioner takes is in the service of the client’s needs – not the practitioner’s needs.
• The client has voice in the process and must agree to the course of treatment for it to proceed.
• The client has the right to expect that the practitioner always acts in the client’s best interest.

Minimizing the Power Differential

1 Communicate Openly and Clearly
2 Honor Physical Boundaries

What are some other things you can do to reduce the Power Differential?

3 Involve Clients in Their Treatments
Boundary Crossings and Violations

A boundary crossing is a transgression that may or may not be experienced as harmful.

A boundary violation is a harmful transgression of a boundary.
Examples of Boundary Crossings and Violations
- Careless or Uninvited Words
- Inappropriate Touch
- Inappropriate Self-Disclosure
- Sexual Misconduct

Sexual Abuse and Misconduct

In a therapeutic relationship, there is a power differential between the client and the therapist. The practitioner is considered a legal caregiver. For this reason, any sexual misconduct regardless of whether the client consents or initiates sexual behavior, is considered sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is a crime.
Common Features: Gender & Context

- Male-on-Female Abuse
  - The cases involve a male therapist and female clients
  - From the research, this is the majority of cases

- So-called Female-on-Male Abuse
  - These cases involve a female therapist and male clients
  - The majority of cases occur in bogus massage establishments with forced sexual slavery of women

Common Features: Patterns of Conduct

- Actions or comments that don’t feel quite right
  - Issues with draping
  - Boundary crossing on one or more areas of the body
  - Excessive sharing and requests for personal information
  - Gradual escalation to more extreme violations
  - Overtly sexual comments
  - Fondling
  - Manual penetration
Examples of Boundary Crossings and Violations

• You are asked to alter receipts
• A client invites you to lunch
• Client asks you to hire them

Understanding Dual Relationships

Understanding Dual Relationships
Understanding Dual Relationships

Boundary Crossing, Violation or Not?

1. Hugging all clients when they arrive.
2. Asking clients for financial advice
3. Dating a current client
4. Telling your spouse specific details about a client.
5. Telling your client about a personal problem.
6. Client asking how much money you make
7. Client arrives late and expects a full treatment
8. A client starts crying on the table and the therapist asks probing questions