

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES FOR TEACHERS

1. **Professional behavior is a priority:** Your personal/professional values, rights, and responsibilities are more important than any sense of needing to be liked by others, needing to please others, or needing to make a "good impression."
2. **Use caution with self-disclosure:** As a teacher/professional, discretion is required regarding what, where, and to whom you disclose personal information. Your role as a teacher and the setting are important considerations.
3. **Beware of boundary violations; take time to respond:** When other people (colleagues, students, friends) illustrate inappropriate boundaries by asking questions or making remarks about which you feel uncomfortable, look to your own boundaries, values, and responsibilities for support and guidance. Remember that it is okay to be silent and to take time to evaluate the situation. Responses such as "I'm thinking about how to respond," "I need time to think a minute," "I haven't really thought much about it," or "Please put that into other words" are appropriate.
4. **Be observant:** Observe the effect boundary violations have on others. Observe how you feel when your boundaries are invaded. This increased awareness will assist you to recognize, establish, and maintain comfortable and healthy boundaries.
5. **Don't be afraid to correct inappropriate behavior:** Your responsibility as a professional is to model and teach appropriate boundaries.
6. **Use extreme caution with physical contact or touching:** Your teaching environment will influence whether or not touching is appropriate; for example, preschool teaching vs. middle school teaching. In short, you are responsible for eliminating any possible misunderstanding. Discuss this issue with your cooperating teacher.
7. **Be prepared:** Becoming a professional is an ongoing process. Allow time each day for self-examination and reflection. We need to continually assess our personal behavior, learn from our experiences, and realize that we will always be faced with unpredictable challenges.

TOUCHING DO's AND DON'Ts

DO's

1. **DO** think before you act. Consider how your actions might look to someone who has only superficial knowledge of education and of the children involved. Always ask yourself how your conduct would look to someone who wants to question your behavior.
2. **DO** keep contemporaneous notes of any situation that you believe might become of concern in the future. Be specific about who, what, where, and when regarding the situation. If needed, carry a dedicated notebook for this purpose.
3. **DO** make sure the door to your room is open when you are meeting with students, that windows are not papered over, and that all student interactions are in plain view of others to the extent possible.

DON'Ts

1. **DON'T** touch a student unless you are confident the touch will be well received. (The exception, of course, is when a student is disruptive.)
2. **DON'T** put yourself in any situation that creates even the impression of impropriety. In particular, never give a student a ride home or invite a student to your home without the express permission of the student's parents and the presence of another adult.
3. **DON'T** become a student's counselor unless that is your job.
4. **DON'T** single out one student for unusual rewards or punishments without consultation with the student's parents or your supervisor.
5. **DON'T** give a written or verbal statement to anyone--the police, a social worker, an administrator, a friend, or even your union representative--involving a situation where you are accused of doing something wrong until you have consulted a person who is knowledgeable about your rights.
6. **DON'T** try to be your own legal counsel.
7. **DON'T** submit a resignation under pressure, regardless of how tempting it might seem at the time.

This is Sexual Harassment!

- Asking questions about a student's, supervisee's, advisee's, or employee's personal sex life.
- Refusing to stop sexual remarks when asked.
- Overusing sexualized content in teaching, such as frequent sexual examples to illustrate more general points in class.
- Making personal sexual comments to students, supervisees, advisees, or employees.
- Unwanted touching of students, supervisees, advisees, or employees.
- Making comments about a student's, supervisee's, advisee's, or employee's bodies or body parts.
- Using patronizing language or making hostile or derogatory comments about women.
- Using primarily women to exemplify negative constructs, including mental illness.
- Making sexual jokes that contribute to a hostile work/school environment for women.
- Characterizing women who object to sexual harassment as sexually repressed or conservative.

*Although men can also be victims of sexual harassment,
women are the primary targets.*

Prepared and Posted by
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