

Module 2: Healthy Boundaries

[FN(Facilitator Note): Be aware that some of the issues covered in this workshop may bring up strong feelings for residents. Please create a plan to best support them.]

Slide 1: Staying Safe

- Hi, as you know I'm NAME. I am presenting part two of a five-part series about Staying Safe from Abuse. Our goal is to make FACILITY a safe space for everybody. Today the topic is healthy boundaries.

Slide 2: Community Agreements

- What we are going to talk about might be sensitive for some of you and could bring up uncomfortable memories or feelings. Whenever we get together in a group, it's important to agree on some rules ahead of time, so that we all know what to expect from others and what's expected of each of us. We are going to start by going over a set of community agreements.
 - **Respect:** You will hear ideas that may be different or new to you, and opinions with which you may disagree. As you participate and interact, try to take in new information without judgment and to keep an open mind. Make sure that your words and body language reflect a respectful attitude toward others.
 - **I statements:** Speak from your own personal experiences and try not to judge the experiences of others. Use I-statements such as "I feel..." or "In my experience..." Avoid saying things like "You should" or "You all think that ..." or other things that might sound like you're blaming someone or telling them how to feel or think.
 - **Ask Questions:** Much of the information that we will cover will be new to many of you. Feel free to ask any questions that come up for you — either during the activity or privately afterward — without fear that the questions are too "silly." Make sure to phrase all questions in respectful and nonjudgmental ways.
 - **Confidentiality:** Please make sure that everything said in the room stays in the room. When sharing personal stories, make sure to avoid using the real names of other people. *[FN: mention mandated reporting limitations specific to your facility]*
 - **Step Up/Step Back:** if you have been speaking a lot, step back and allow others to share the floor. Learn by listening to others. If you haven't been talking at all, challenge yourself to share.

- **One Mic, One Person:** Just one person speaks at a time. Side conversations will make it difficult to hear and are disrespectful to the person who has the floor.
 - **Remember to take care of yourself:** If something becomes too overwhelming, feel free to *[FN: insert support plan here]*.
 - **Reporting:** If you would like to report something that happened to you or someone else, please *[FN: insert support plan here]*.
- **Ask:** Does anybody have any questions? Can everyone agree to these ground rules? If so, we're going to get started with some definitions.

Slide 3: Zero Tolerance

- Zero tolerance means this facility does not tolerate any behavior that makes a resident feel unsafe here.
- Anyone who reports abuse will be protected
- Anyone who is abusive will be held accountable

Slide 4: What is a Boundary?

- A boundary is like a line. It's a limit or guideline that helps you to know what feels okay and what doesn't. You can also think of boundaries as fences. They keep things out, but they also keep things in. Boundaries help to protect you by helping you to set limits that keep you safe and feeling comfortable.
- **Ask:** Think about a boundary as a fence for a moment. What is the purpose of a fence?
 - (Possible answers: keep things in; keep things out; show where your property begins and where your property ends; provide safety and privacy; protect your property; let other people know what space is yours.)
- Personal boundaries are like the community agreements that we reviewed in the beginning of the workshop. We use them to make sure our workshop runs smoothly. By agreeing to treat each other with respect before we even start, we make sure we all know what's expected in this group. We have all agreed that treating others with respect is important here. If we didn't have an agreement about I-statements, we might use blaming or judgmental statements that make others feel like they can't talk freely. If we did not have an agreement about confidentiality, someone might talk about what was said here after group — either intentionally, to gossip, or unintentionally, in conversation.

Slide 5: Forms of Boundaries

- We are going to talk about three forms of boundaries.
- **Physical boundaries** relate to your personal space, privacy, and body. Do you give a handshake or a hug – to whom and when? How do you feel about locked doors? How do you feel about being in groups or crowds? What kind of personal space do you need to feel safe and comfortable?
- **Mental boundaries** apply to your thoughts, values, and opinions. Are you clear about what you believe? Can you listen to someone else's opinion with an open mind? Do you stick to what you think even when peers disagree?
- **Emotional boundaries** help you separate your feelings from other people's feelings. Healthy emotional boundaries help you to know when something is your own feeling and when it's someone else's. When someone else has a problem, do you feel as if it is your problem? Are you able to comfort a friend who is sad without feeling just as sad as he or she does?
- **Discussion scenarios:**
 - One of your peers asks you to borrow your homework assignment. You worked hard on it and you don't want to lose points, so you say, "no." Your peer asks again, saying that he or she just had some bad news from home and will not be able to concentrate to finish it.
 - How can you handle the situation?
 - Is it possible to be a kind person and keep healthy boundaries? How?
 - One of your peers always sits very close to you, leans close when talking, and touches you on the shoulder. You need a lot of personal space to feel comfortable and prefer to keep an arm's distance from people whenever possible. This peer is your friend and you don't want to hurt his or her feelings, but you feel uncomfortable every time he or she comes near you.
 - How can you handle the situation?
 - Is there a way to do it without making your friend feel bad? What if there isn't — is it more important to make your boundaries clear or to avoid hurting your friend?
- Sometimes, we put up with things that make us feel uncomfortable to avoid hurting other people's feelings. What do you think? Is that always bad? How do you decide when your boundary has been stretched too much, when it is worth it to set your boundary even if it hurts someone's feelings?

Slide 6: Where Are Your Boundaries?

- Hand each resident a blank piece of paper and three colors of markers. Let them know that they do not have to share what they write or draw. This can be a personal exercise.
- Ask residents to draw a mini-self portrait (it can be a stick figure or more complex, however they are comfortable). Now draw a circle around the picture to show how much personal space they need to feel comfortable. Use one color to show where strangers can be, one to show where acquaintances can be, and one where very close friends and family can be. It's okay if the three colors are all in the same place. There is no wrong way to do this.
- Now add symbols or words to show what mental and emotional boundaries are important to you. What thoughts and beliefs are most important? For example, if loyalty to your family and friends is very important to you, you could write 'loyalty' inside your inner circle. If having someone to listen to you when you feel sad is important, you could draw an ear inside the inner circle. Think about what is not okay with you. Those are the things you want to keep outside your boundary. Some people are very organized and hate it when someone moves or reorganizes their belongings. If that is true for you, you could write the word "mess" or draw a pile of trash outside your circle. What about emotional boundaries? What is not okay with you? Do you find that you can't sleep at night when you have talked to friends who are going through a hard time because you feel so bad for them? If so, you could draw a worried face outside your circle.
- **Ask:** Did you learn anything from doing your picture? Did anything surprise you? Would anyone like to share their picture?
- **Ask:** Why do you think boundaries are so personal, and can be different for every person? Where do we learn or develop them?

Slide 7: Different Types of Boundaries

- Boundaries are personal and unique. Some people are very comfortable hugging and some are not. Some people love to talk and share about themselves, and some people are extremely uncomfortable opening up like that. Some people trust quickly and others take a long time to trust a new person.
- Boundaries are sometimes described as "rigid" or "loose."

- A person who has rigid boundaries may not let anyone get close to them, no matter what. He or she may see keeping a wall up as the way to protect him or herself from being hurt.
- A person who has loose boundaries may trust everyone very easily. To that person, being alone might seem scarier than taking the risk to trust people.
- The important thing with boundaries is finding a balance between protecting yourself and being able to build good relationships with other people.
- Paying attention to both our own boundaries and to others' boundaries can help us not get hurt or taken advantage of by others and to not hurt or take advantage of others.
- Some people are very comfortable setting boundaries and speaking up for themselves and some people or not. Setting and keeping healthy boundaries is a skill that takes time to learn.
- Knowing when to say “yes” and how to say “no” is hard for most people. If you grew up in a home where no one listened to you, for example, you may have gotten the message that it doesn't matter whether you say "no" to something or not, so you might not bother to try and set boundaries. Having difficulty setting healthy boundaries doesn't make you weak, just as setting very strict boundaries doesn't make you mean. We all learn from our experiences. The good news is that we can all keep learning, and setting healthy boundaries is a skill like many other life skills.

Slide 8: Healthy or Unhealthy

- In this next exercise, I am going to read you a few short scenarios. If you think the person is displaying healthy boundaries, raise your hand. If you think the person is displaying unhealthy boundaries, just keep your hands down.
 - A new resident, Lisa, arrived at FACILITY yesterday. Your friend, Jenae, tells you that she is in love with Lisa, since meeting her yesterday, and she's going to get with her no matter what. (Unhealthy)
 - Bobby likes hanging out with Pedro because they are into the same video games. Bobby's roommate, Joel, told Bobby to stop hanging out with Pedro because he is a computer geek. Bobby stopped eating lunch with Pedro because he didn't want to be seen as a geek, even though he considered Pedro a friend. (Unhealthy)

- Jessie just arrived at FACILITY last week. Kylie asked Jessie out. Jessie is attracted to Kylie, but said, “Give me some time to get situated and get to know you.” (Healthy)
- Natasha, Mei, and Jose had a group project at school. Natasha was very busy because she is in the theater program, leads a peer support group, and volunteers with the agency religious program. Natasha was feeling overwhelmed because she was behind on her part of the project. Even though Natasha was embarrassed, she asked Mei and Jose for help. Mei and Jose both understood and were happy to help her. (Healthy)
- Omar offered Pablo drugs. Pablo didn’t want to take them, because he saw how they messed up his mom. He took them because he didn’t want to seem like a loser and he wanted Omar to like him. (Unhealthy)
- Leo put his arm around Glen while they were sitting on the couch. Glen doesn't like being touched, so he moved over and said, "You're cool and all, but I don't want to lose any points." (Healthy)
- Mari has been at FACILITY for just a few days. She gets a letter from her boyfriend, Kevin, at home. Kevin says he can't stand to be away from her. He tells her to write to him about everything she does every day, including who she talks to, and demands she call him the minute she gets out of FACILITY. This isn't so different from when she was at home — Kevin used to text her 40 or 50 times a day and demand that she text him right back. Mari writes back to Kevin and tells him that she's not getting back with him when she gets out. (Healthy)
- Ms. Jones, a staff member, confides in Mona, a resident, that she had a hard childhood. Mona appreciates it at first because she believes that Ms. Jones can understand some of what Mona's going through. Ms. Jones goes on to share some really personal and deep stuff that makes Mona feel like she has to comfort Ms. Jones. Mona tells her therapist about it the next time she has an appointment because she has had a couple of nightmares since talking to Ms. Jones. (Ms. Jones: Unhealthy; Mona: Healthy)

Slide 9: How to Set Boundaries

- **Know** that setting boundaries is a way of caring for yourself.
- **Identify the actions and behaviors that you find unacceptable.** Let others know when they've crossed the line or disrespected you. Practice telling others when you need emotional and physical space.
- **Learn to say no.** As we discussed earlier, many of us go along with something we don't really want to do because we don't want to seem mean, selfish, or uncaring. It

is important to pay attention to our own needs and take the risk to say "no" when there is something we don't want to do.

- **Learn to say yes.** On the other hand, many of us feel embarrassed or ashamed to accept friendship, affection, or help. Everybody needs friends, guidance, and support sometimes. There's no shame in needing others and it takes a strong person to admit when they need help. It also takes strength to take the risk to trust someone new.
- **Plan ahead.** If you know ahead of time that you are going to be in a situation where your boundaries might be challenged, come up with a plan. It's true that you can't plan for every situation, but you can think about how you would react to many situations. Think about how you know when your boundaries are being violated. Do you feel angry or scared? Do you get a feeling in the pit of your stomach? Learn to recognize the signs and plan what you will do.

Slide 10: Enforce Your Boundaries

- If someone violates your boundaries, it is important to tell them. If you feel comfortable doing so, you can tell them what boundary they are violating and what you need them to do to respect your boundary. For example, "I'm not going to share what I wrote in my journal and I want you to stop asking."
- You can make this clear either verbally or physically.
- That means something as simple as saying, "No." You can also tell them what you mean physically. When we say physically we don't mean punching someone, we mean you can walk away. You can also do both. Think about what Glen did when Leo approached him, in the scenario. He moved away and said he wasn't interested in a kind and respectful way.
- Be prepared that, sometimes, others will not like it when you set a boundary. Think about what you will do if someone you care about or look up to is hurt, confused, or even angry when you set a boundary. What if they try to make you feel bad, guilt trip you, or insult you?
- Remember, there is no need to defend, debate, or over explain your reasons for setting a boundary. You are taking care of yourself and people who don't support you in doing that may not be your friends.

Slide 11: How to Get Help

- If someone is violating your boundaries, remember that you are not alone. No one has the right to violate your boundaries, and we include staff, peers, family, teachers —anyone in your life.
- Keep in mind that you have many resources in your corner and you can get help. Everyone needs help to set boundaries sometimes. The people who care about you being healthy and happy, including the staff here, will probably be willing to help you. Remember, though, that if staff or other adults do something that is against the rules or just doesn't seem like part of their job and they violate your boundaries, it is important to tell a different adult.
- If you do not feel comfortable talking to a staff or your clinician, think about who else you can go to for support. Is there a family member, friend, or someone else in your life who you trust?
- Many of us are good at supporting friends. We encourage friends to take care of themselves and to speak up for themselves. Setting healthy boundaries and asking for help when you need it is really about being as good a friend to yourself as you are to other people.