



## Unit: Stress Management

### Skill 14: Establishing boundaries

#### Activity B: Not Here, Not Now

#### Activity Skills:

Small group discussion.

#### Leadership Skills:

Understanding ways to maintain boundaries between your leadership role and the rest of your life.

#### Suggested Level:

Advanced

#### Time:

30 minutes

#### Supplies needed:

- Scenarios for skits.
- Flipchart and markers.

#### Do Ahead:

N/A

#### Source:

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#### BACKGROUND:

What are the boundaries that need to be maintained between our work and personal lives? Can you chat with your friends on the phone from work? Can you bring your toddler to a business meeting? Some boundaries are easy to figure out, but some are a little fuzzier and harder to define. And even once we define them, sometimes life makes it hard to always adhere to the boundaries.

- Suppose you are asked to carry a cell phone for work so you can be available to your staff and colleagues for extended hours. You're in the office from 8 to 5, but available by phone from 7 until 6. Do you answer a call during your family dinner at 6:15?
- Suppose you are working as a supervisor and have a really difficult situation that you are dealing with at work. One of your staff calls you at home to discuss it. What do you do?
- Suppose you are juggling both work and school, and have a major homework assignment due the next day. You did spend a lot of time on the assignment over the weekend, but it's taking longer than you expected, and you need to take a longer lunch hour to make sure your homework is finished before class this evening. How do you handle it?

The answer to all the questions above is that it depends. Every work situation is unique, and every workplace has its own set of rules and standards. One of the most important considerations is whether it is a one-time circumstance, or an ongoing pattern.

For example, if you consistently get calls after your hours end at 6, then you need to discuss your hours with the person who keeps calling – even if it is your boss. If your staff person calls at home, is the situation such that it's worth talking about away from work to sort out the issue, or does this person call regularly to talk about every little gripe? If you are up front with your supervisor about your homework and explain that you'd like to take an extra half hour to wrap up a big assignment over lunch, and that you'll make up the time tomorrow and not let this become a pattern, can you handle this particular crisis and manage your time better for the next assignment?

#### WHAT TO DO:

This activity is done in partners or small groups of 3-4 people. Have each pair or small group come up with a situation where the boundaries between work and personal lives have gotten blurred. Have each pair or group create a small role play to illustrate the situation, and how they recommend re-establishing the boundary. Allow 5-10 minutes for this planning portion, and then reconvene to have each group present their situation.

## Skill 14: Establishing boundaries

### Activity B: Not Here, Not Now

Notes:

#### TALK IT OVER:

##### *Reflect:*

- What kinds of situations did the groups think of?
- Was it easy or hard to figure out the way to handle the situations?
- Did people in your group have experience with these kinds of situations?
- What are the outside factors that influence the situation? Are these beyond your control?
- What are the barriers to re-establishing these boundaries? Are there creative ways to work around them?

##### *Apply:*

- What professional boundary maintenance standards can we generate from this activity? (Generate a list on a flipchart for everyone to see.)
- Why is it hard to follow these guidelines when you're involved directly?
- Are there people whom you can turn to for advice? Why do they have a different perspective?
- When and where do you need to re-establish clear boundaries in your own work-personal lives?

#### BEYOND THE BOX:

##### *Optional Homework:*

Ask students to write up a situation where the work and personal boundaries have gotten blurred. Have them identify the outside factors and barriers to re-establishing the boundaries, and propose a strategy to clarify the boundaries even with these challenges.

##### *Resources And Web Links:*