Professional Boundaries Self-Assessment Quiz

Managing the boundaries between you and your clients is a difficult juggling act. This self assessment tool aims to help you think about yourself and the professional boundaries that underpin your work. Choose the answers that are closest to how you think you would respond in real life, then check the scores and see how tight or loose your professional boundaries are.

Q1 You are walking down the street with your partner and see a client you are currently working with walking towards you.

Do you:

a) Ignore them?

b) Make eye contact and see what they want to do?

c) Nod a brief hello to them?

d) Stop and chat with them?

e) Stop them and introduce your partner?

Q2 Your work mobile phone is broken and one of your clients needs to be able to contact you about the outcome of a custody case on a day that you are working out of the office.

Do you:

a) Give them your personal number but tell them it is a one-off and not to use it again.

b) Give them your personal phone number but tell them it is a new work number.

c) Tell them to call the office and leave a message.

d) Say your phone is broken and blame lack of resources.

Q3 One of your clients notices you are reading a book by their favorite author. You have just finished the book and can tell they would love to read it.

Do you:

a) Give them the book?

b) Hurriedly put the book away?

c) Discuss the ideas and themes of the book with them?
d) Suggest they join the local library?

e) Offer to lend them the book?

Q4 A client asks if you have a partner and children.

Do you:

a) Give a totally honest answer?

b) Tell them it's none of their business?

c) Acknowledge your situation without giving too much information away?

d) Get out your family photos?

e) Have a moan about your partner/lack of partner?

Q5 A client confides in you that they smoke cannabis to help them deal with their issues. They are not a chronic user, it does not appear to be doing them any harm, and they feel it helps them relax.

Do you:

a) Suggest that they keep an eye on any side-effects on their mental or physical health?

b) Warn them strongly about the dangers of cannabis?

c) Suggest that they attend a drugs rehabilitation program?

d) Ask further questions about their use?

e) Say that it seems that cannabis is the least of their problems?

f) Say that many people do self-medicate with cannabis and, as long as they don't smoke too much, they should be fine?

Q6 A client you have been working with stops engaging with you and rejects your attempts to support them.

How do you feel?

a) Sad.

b) Annoyed.
c) Disappointed.

d) Angry.

e) Not bothered.

**Q7** A client tells you that you really "get" them, that no-one else understands them, and that they think you are a wonderful person.

**Do you:**

a) Thank them and say that they are a special person too?

b) Act pleased but modest?

c) Explain that you are just doing your job?

d) Tell them to stop being soft?

e) Give them a hug?

**Q8** A client gets engaged and promises to invite you to their wedding, saying they would really like you to be there after everything you have been through together.

**Do you:**

a) Say you will start looking for an outfit.

b) Tell them that you don’t think it is appropriate for you to go.

c) Tell them you would love to go but professional boundaries mean that you can't.

d) Be vague, but intending not to go.

**Q9** You are working with an elderly client who is unable to leave the house. At the end of a home visit, they ask you to pop to the shops for them because they have no food in the house. It is outside your job description and your hours of work.

**Do you:**

a) Take the money offered and go to the shops for them "just this once"?

b) Say you are unable to go for them?

c) Offer to do the shopping on a regular basis for them?
d) Ring your organization and get clearance to do the shopping?

e) Don't do the shopping this time but arrange adequate support for the future?

**Q10** You are working with a client who flirts with you in one-to-one sessions. You believe they are becoming sexually attracted to you.

**Do you:**

a) Speak to your manager about the situation?

b) Play along with them so you don't hurt their feelings?

c) Tell them that this is a professional relationship and that they should not be so over-friendly?

d) Get them transferred to another worker?

e) Stop booking one-to-one sessions with them?

f) Book a home visit to discuss the situation?

**Q11** One of your clients used to be a financial adviser. While chatting, they tell you about some stocks and shares you should buy now to make lots of money. You currently have some money you are looking to invest.

Do you:

a) Tell them that you are here to advise them, not the other way round?

b) Tell them you don't invest in the stock market, but follow their advice secretly?

c) Be polite but disinterested and ignore the advice?

d) Ask them for more details so you can check it out later?

**Q12** A new client spontaneously gives you a hug at the end of a particularly positive session.

Do you:

a) Hug them back and tell them what a positive session it was?

b) Let them hug you but don't really engage?

c) Avoid the hug and tell them that it is not appropriate?

d) Accept the hug and tell them it is not appropriate?
e) Tell them to never touch you?

Q13 You turn up for a home visit and your client answers the door wrapped in a towel.

Do you:

a) Refuse to enter the house or to start the session?

b) Tell them to put some clothes on and wait outside while they do?

c) Laugh it off and go in anyway?

d) Suggest they need to put some clothes on before starting the session?

Q14 You turn up to meet your friends for a drink in the pub. You see one of your current clients there with some of her friends and she looks slightly drunk.

Do you:

a) Ignore your client all night?

b) Speak to your client and suggest they leave the pub?

c) Ask your friends to leave with you to another pub?

d) Have a word with your client and suggest that you ignore each other?

e) Buy your client a drink?

Q15 One of your clients brings you an expensive bottle of perfume/aftershave as a gift towards the end of your time working with them.

Do you:

a) Accept the gift with thanks?

b) Refuse the gift as inappropriate?

c) Accept the gift but say you will have to share it with the team?

d) Accept the gift, document it and report it to your manager?

Q16 While chatting with a client, they mention your favorite band/musician/composer and talk about how much they love them

Do you:
a) Listen and ask them questions?

b) Say how much you like the artiste?

c) Start chatting in depth about the music/lyrics?

d) Talk about the time you saw them play live?

e) Change the topic of conversation?

Q17 You are chatting with a group of clients when one of them tells a racist joke. All the other clients laugh and, although tasteless, the joke makes you want to giggle.

Do you

a) Smile to yourself but walk away?

b) Keep a straight face and say nothing?

c) Challenge the clients directly about the implicit racism?

d) Say that you find the joke offensive?

e) Remind them of the rules about racist language?

f) Laugh (but not too loud)?

This article is published in the 10 September 2009 edition of Community Care magazine under the headline “How tight (or loose) are your professional boundaries?”
### Boundaries Self Assessment Tool – scoring table

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**Total Score ________**

**21 - 33**  
Your boundaries are very tight. You should loosen up a bit and try to see things from your clients’ point of view.

**34 - 52**  
You're nice and safe. You could stretch yourself and explore the boundaries of your relationships with clients.

**53 - 70**  
You are treading a fine line. If you do it with enough consideration, judgement and caution, you will be fine. If you are not careful enough, you will cause problems for yourself, your team or your clients.

**71 - 76**  
Your boundaries are very loose. You are setting up yourself or your clients to fail. Have a good think about your motivations and personal boundaries.

**77 - 82**  
Your boundaries are non-existent. You need to tighten them fast before you cause some serious problems.

Quiz compiled by Frank Cooper, List of Life Ltd, www.listoflife.com/avants