

## Discovering Your Boundary Issues

Oftentimes as health care practitioners you may be unaware of when you are overstepping boundaries with clients. You may feel uneasy about your relationship with a particular client, yet the reason eludes you. This checklist (adapted from the work of Estelle Disch) helps you illuminate boundary issues with one or more of your clients. To do this exercise imagine a problematic relationship that you are having or had with one of your clients. Place a checkmark next to the statements that apply to you in this situation.

1. \_\_\_ This client feels more like a friend than a client.
2. \_\_\_ I often tell my personal problems to this client.
3. \_\_\_ I want to be friends with this client when treatment ends.
4. \_\_\_ I think the goodbye hugs last too long with this client.
5. \_\_\_ Sessions often run overtime with the client.
6. \_\_\_ I accept gifts or favors from this client without examining why the gift was given.
7. \_\_\_ I have a barter arrangement with this client that is sometimes the source of tension for me.
8. \_\_\_ I sometimes choose my clothing with this particular client in mind.
9. \_\_\_ I have attended small professional or social events at which I knew this client would be present without discussing before.
10. \_\_\_ This client often invites me to social events and I don't feel comfortable saying either yes or no.
11. \_\_\_ Sometimes when I'm touching this client during our regular sessions, I feel the contact is sexual for either or both of us.
12. \_\_\_ This client is very seductive and I often don't know how to handle it.
13. \_\_\_ This client owes me a lot of money and I don't know what to do about it.
14. \_\_\_ I have invited this client to public or social events.
15. \_\_\_ I am often late for sessions with this particular client.
16. \_\_\_ I find myself cajoling, teasing and joking a lot with this client.
17. \_\_\_ I am in a heavy emotional crisis myself and I identify so much with this client's pain that I can hardly attend to the client.
18. \_\_\_ I allow this client to comfort me.
19. \_\_\_ I feel like this client and I are very much alike.
20. \_\_\_ This client scares me.
21. \_\_\_ This client's pain is so deep I can hardly tolerate it.
22. \_\_\_ I enjoy feeling more powerful than this client.
23. \_\_\_ Sometimes I feel like I'm over my head with this client.
24. \_\_\_ I feel that I am the only person who can really help this client.
25. \_\_\_ I often feel hooked or lost with this client and advice from colleagues and former teachers hasn't helped.
26. \_\_\_ I often feel invaded or pushed by this client and have difficulty standing my ground.
27. \_\_\_ I feel overly protective of this client.
28. \_\_\_ I have been doing things for this client that I don't usually do with other clients.
29. \_\_\_ I sometimes have a drink or use recreational drugs with this client.
30. \_\_\_ I'm doing so much on this client's behalf I feel exhausted.
31. \_\_\_ I am reluctant to discuss certain client/practitioner interactions in my peer supervision group.
32. \_\_\_ I accommodate this client's schedule and then feel angry/manipulated.
33. \_\_\_ This client has invested money in an enterprise of mine or vice versa.
34. \_\_\_ I have hired this client to work for me.
35. \_\_\_ I find it difficult to keep from talking about this client with my close friends and colleagues.
36. \_\_\_ I find myself engaged in a lot of self-disclosure with this client-telling stories and carrying on peer-like conversation.
37. \_\_\_ I feel emotionally drained after working with this client.
38. \_\_\_ My body, especially my arms, feels heavy after working with this client.

If you check off any of these items, boundary issues may be interfering with your ability to work effectively and ethically and we highly recommend you seek professional supervision to assist you in developing stronger boundaries. We suggest that you periodically do this exercise to give you insight into areas where you might want to further your knowledge or get support.