



THE TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

# Developing and Maintaining Professional Relationships

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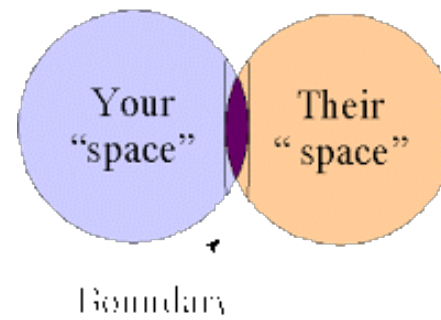
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# Professional Boundaries

- Guidelines, rules or limits created to identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around you and how you will respond when someone steps outside those limits
- Parameters for appropriate, ethical, respectful and legal interactions
- Physical, mental, emotional, social dividing lines between us and others



# Boundaries

- Purposes
  - Keep people from treating us badly
  - Keep us from treating others badly
- Personal – family, friends
- Public - strangers
- Professional – colleagues, clients, supervisors, supervisees



# External Boundaries

- Monitoring and regulating the quantity and quality of other people's interactions with us
  - Physical space
  - Touching
  - Use of time
  - Being criticized or yelled at
  - Discussing personal issues
  - Nonwork related phone calls, texts
  - Nonwork related activities, socializing
  - Gift-giving



# Setting Boundaries

- Use simple, direct, non-confrontational language; no need to defend, debate, or over-explain.
  - I've found it's important to keep my personal and work lives separate.
  - When you.....I feel.....I would appreciate/like you.....
  - I'm already committed.....That won't work for me.
  - Can I get back to you on that?
- Be consistent and equitable in setting and maintaining boundaries.



# Internal Boundaries

- How I will or will not interact with others
  - Not engage in sexual bantering
  - Not “friend” colleagues on social media; will have privacy settings
  - Not dress provocatively
  - Not send or post jokes
  - Not waste others’ time
  - Not gossip or get into others’ business
  - Will respect others’ privacy

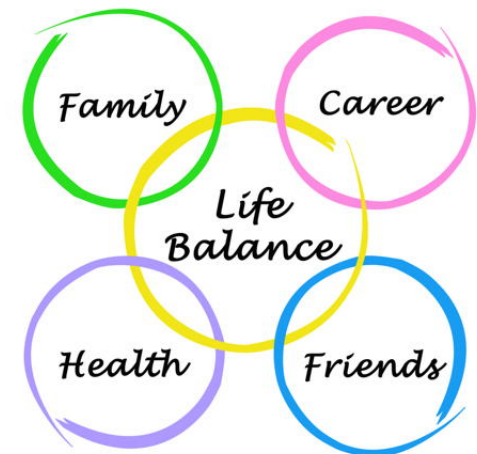


# Videos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhW4g9urdXQ>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly-XF\\_K-o3g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly-XF_K-o3g)

# Important -- Balance

- OK to be friendly at work, but you are at work TO WORK, not to make friends.
- As long as you keep your relationships professional, you can't be accused of "crossing the line" and getting into trouble
- If unsure of a boundary, ASK!





# Supervisors

- Vicarious liability – supervisor guilty = employer guilty; you may be individually sued
- You establish the professional boundaries in the office
- Set the example, with your words and actions, that you want the rest of the office to follow
- Practice self-awareness during interactions
- You have the power; don't abuse it
- Be equitable and consistent to all





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