

Boundaries Webinar FAQ

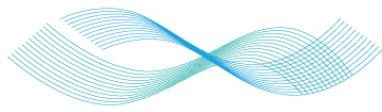
Thank you for sharing your feedback and for asking your questions! It's very helpful for us to see which areas and topics people are curious to further explore. We've created this FAQ document to explore, elaborate, and address these topics. We're also including a list of mental health resources – both crisis and non-crisis support – at the end.

The topic of boundaries is vast and the journey is one of personal and relational development that is, indeed, lifelong. We hope these additional reflections will be good food for thought, and we encourage you to reach out for support if that feels like it will be beneficial to you, your family, your community.

*Respectfully,
Kim Sedore and Sarah Wash*

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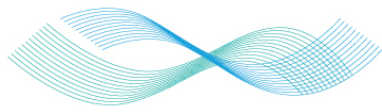


How do I set boundaries with people who have mental health challenges and substance use disorders?

- Mental health challenges and substance use disorders affect not only the person directly, but their support network as well. It's hard when we want to be there for each other, and yet being there is very difficult. Sometimes we can't be there in the way we would like. Remember that you are not alone, there are supports and services for mental health and also for substance use disorders and addictions. Connecting with your doctor and the mental health team here at Taddle Creek FHT, we can help with these connections to specific services and programs for your family. Caregiver Support services and counselling are becoming more accessible. Please see the list of resources at the bottom of this document for more information.
- Setting boundaries with other people can be challenging, especially if the person we are communicating with is in a dysregulated place. Having compassion for other people and their situations is important, but it is important that we are not compromising our own needs for others. We benefit from applying compassion to ourselves as well. Try these four steps for boundary setting:
 1. Determine the boundary that you would like to set (check in with yourself, consider talking with trusted people in your life - what do you need?)
 2. Remind yourself that your needs and boundaries are valid and important
 3. Practice expressing your boundary ahead of time, using "I" statements and assertive communication skills.
 4. Express your boundary to the person - be as clear, firm, respectful, and succinct as possible.

How can I practice compassion with myself and others?

- From Sarah Wash's article on Self-Compassion in this month of the Taddler: "Just like any new skill, growing self-compassion takes time and practice. There are a variety of strategies we can use to increase our self-compassion. One way is by trying to notice when we are saying something to ourselves that we wouldn't say to someone we care about and talking to ourselves as if we were talking to a close friend. We can also try externalizing our harsh inner voice, such as by giving it a name (ex. the critic) and calling it out when we notice the negative self-talk happening. For example, saying "there is ____, at it again!" or simply stating "STOP" when unhelpful thoughts come up".
- Dr. Kristin Neff has been developing many tools and a specific approach for practicing 'mindful self-compassion' in support of mental health. Her website is here: <https://self-compassion.org/>. Her list of guided meditations can be soothing a good reminder of how self-compassion is at base treating ourselves with love and understanding, as we would a good friend: <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#guided-meditations>



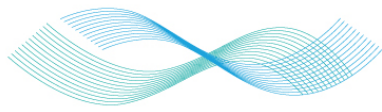
How do I set boundaries with family members?

- Setting boundaries with family members can be challenging, especially if our needs have not been heard or respected in the past. Some patterns can feel like they've always been there, even if they've been a source of stress, they can feel difficult to change. Remember that we can only really change our own approach, and hope that that shift can lead to positive change with others. Verbal communication can help shift out of unhelpful assumptions. Having the support of a family therapist can be helpful in highlighting patterns, holding space for all members to express themselves and be supported as they hear sometimes difficult information, and that help find new ways of being together.
- In situations with family and friends, we can try to apply the 'green, yellow, red' tool from Melissa Urban's book *The Book of Boundaries*.
- **Green** - Assume the person does not yet know the boundary, communicate it gently
- **Yellow** - Figure the person has forgotten, remind them of the boundary and what you will do to honour it
- **Red** - Identify that the person does not respect the boundary. Engage in activity that will help you honour the consequence

It is important that the boundaries we set are consistent and that we are prepared to take action, something that is within your realm of control, to follow-through on honouring the boundary

What is an example of how to set boundaries?

- Here is an example of setting boundaries using the green, yellow, red, analogy described above. THE SWEATER:
- **Green** – You lend a friend a sweater on a cold day and they don't give it back to you the next time you see them. You'd like the sweater back. Assume that they don't know your boundary (in this case, an expectation – boundaries can be limits and expectations) and communicate to them that you would like to have your sweater back, that they can bring it next visit. For example: "I was happy to lend you that sweater when you needed it. I love that sweater and would like to have it back, will you bring it next time?"
- **Yellow** – Next visit, your friend does not bring the sweater. Figure they've forgotten about the boundary, remind them of the boundary and inform them of what you will do to honour it. "I was hoping to have my sweater returned today, I'd mentioned last time that I'd like it back – I didn't give it to you for keeps. Could you drop it by my place, or bring it next time? If not, I won't be lending you any more clothes in the future."
- **Red** – Next visit, no sweater. Identify that the person does not respect the boundary. Engage in activity that will help you honour the consequence and communicate clearly. You can use assertive communication strategies to let the person know how you feel, if you like – use "I-statements" and refer to the impact of the behaviour on you: "I've



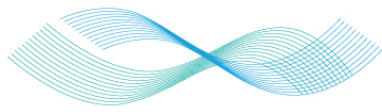
asked for my sweater a couple times now, and you haven't returned it. I value our friendship and I'm happy to be able to share my things. This doesn't feel like sharing to me, it feels like you're taking things from me and that's not okay with me. I'm going to take a step back from lending you my things until we can figure out a system that works for both of us."

How do you manage anxiety and fear around boundaries?

- As discussed in the webinar, setting boundaries is not easy, especially if it is something that is relatively new, or if we're worried about the consequences of setting a boundary and how others will respond.
- It can be helpful to explore our fears and anxieties – this can be done through both self-reflection (i.e., journaling) or also through talking with a trusted other (i.e., a good friend, family member, or therapist). Once we understand where our fears and anxieties are coming from, we can be clear with ourselves about what we're concerned about and we can then work to cope with and address our concerns.
- Each situation is going to be different, some fears will benefit from reassurance. Other fears are a signal that more support, planning, and/or problem-solving is needed in response to the concern.

What are internet boundaries? What are strategies and tools I can use to help limit my time on the internet?

- Internet boundaries refer to what is okay and not okay for us when we are using the internet. Some things to consider are privacy settings, time limits, and expectations with communication. If you feel that you are spending too much time online and would like to reduce your time online, there are some tools that can help you. For some people, tracking screen time can be a helpful tool to determine where they are spending time and what they might want to reduce. Sometimes using applications that block off certain sites (i.e., 'FocalFilter' for Windows and 'SelfControl' for Mac) can allow you to block websites for certain amounts of time. There are also phone apps like 'Forest' and 'Stay Focused' that encourage you to not go on your phone or will lock it for extended periods of your time. Other tips include, reducing notifications on your devices, or putting on 'do not disturb' to reduce temptation, interruption, or distraction.
- Taking a break from social media by temporarily suspending your account(s) can be a source of insight and can provide the opportunity to explore other interests and ways of connecting.
- Remember that when we are preparing to stop or reduce an activity or behaviour, it's helpful to brainstorm what we will do with our time instead. Consider what you are gaining from your internet/gaming/device use and think of some alternative, preferred, and safe ways to have those needs met.



- There are mental health professionals who specialize in support people to re-establish their relationship with internet, screens, gaming, and digital device/culture. CAMH offers OHIP-covered support for Problematic Technology Use (PTU), with a physician's referral. For more information on PTU, please visit this website:
<https://kmb.camh.ca/ggtu/knowledge-translation/problem-technology-use>

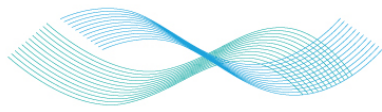
What are strategies we can use to stop us from oversharing personal information with others?

- It's safe to say that most of over-share sometimes – there's even a slang acronym to make light of it (TMI – too much information).
- Having porous boundaries is completely okay, as long as we feel that others are still respecting our needs. If there is someone in your life who you have been open with and are starting to feel that this is no longer safe for you, it may be a good idea to start to make those boundaries more rigid with that person. Depending on the relationship, it might be helpful to put words to how you're feeling and communicate with this person. If it feels safe, you could let them know that you're feeling you overshared and you've been reflecting on that. Maybe this means sharing a bit less with them in the future or taking some space and seeing how this feels for you.

If you find that you are consistently oversharing with others and it is causing you to feel uncomfortable or unsafe, it may be valuable to evaluate what is contributing to this pattern. Our boundaries have a lot to do with what we witnessed and experienced in our early experiences. Sometimes seeking mental health support can be helpful on this journey. A list of mental health resources can be found at the end of this document.

What do I do if rigid boundaries and aggressive communication make me feel unsafe?

- If something that someone else is doing is causing us to feel unsafe, it is important that we listen to and do something to respond to that feeling. If someone is communicating to you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, it may be a good idea to take a step back and get some support.
- If someone is setting rigid boundaries with us, it is important that we consider why this may be. It can be hard to hear and accept "no", but it is also important that we honour other people's feelings and needs.



How do I set boundaries at work? What to do if home or work load is too much?

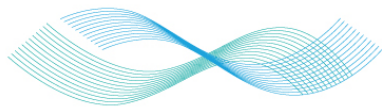
- What feels do-able is going to vary from person to person, and will also change at different times in our lives. Our capacity can change depending on the big picture with our health, other commitments, other stressors. It can be helpful to look at this as a balance of resources and demands. On the resources side, you have your strengths, your skills, your supports; on the demands side you have the commitments, stressors. When demands out-weigh the resources, we either need to shore-up our resources, or decrease the demands, or both. Consulting with trusted friends and family, or a professional counsellor, can be helpful to make an action plan and to have the support to follow through.

How to set boundaries with kids?

- In many ways, you may be doing it without noticing as it can come naturally. A lot of the time, they are in place without discussion - family norms and body language speak volumes. Any time you say yes or no, you are communicating about limits and expectations. Boundaries let kids know what's okay and what's not okay, what the family rules are. They also help kids learn more about, and be more comfortable, socializing with peers and other people in their lives.
- Communicating verbally and directly about boundaries can be very helpful, especially if a boundary needs an update, or hasn't been respected. Using the same strategies for communicating with adults can work as a general guideline: the green/yellow/red light approach, and assertive (aka non-violent) communication (focus on the behaviour, using I-statements, communicate about the impact of the behaviour, what you would prefer, and what you will do to honour the limit or expectation). Remember that children will always benefit from the reassurance that they are cared for, and even when you're having difficult discussions or correcting behaviour, that your relationship can handle that challenge of addressing these concerns.
- When you set helpful boundaries with kids, and when they witness you doing this in your own life with others, you are modelling

More information on Mobile Mental Health Crisis Services in Toronto:

Calling 2-1-1, open 24/7, for Toronto Community Crisis Services: The workers are mental health support and crisis intervention volunteers. Many are social workers, nurses, and other trained crisis response workers. Participating agencies include: TAIBU Community Health Centre, Gerstein Crisis Centre, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), and CMHA partners including: Addiction Services of Central Ontario, Black Creek Community Health Centre, Black Health Alliance, CAFCAN, Jane/Finch Community and



Family Centre, Rexdale Community Health Centre and Yorktown Family Services. For more information, please see the video on this website: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/public-safety-alerts/community-safety-programs/toronto-community-crisis-service/>

Calling 9-1-1, open 24/7: A direct line to police, fire, and ambulance emergency services. With 9-1-1, you can also request a Mobile Crisis Intervention Team (MCIT), which are mental health crisis response teams through partnerships with the Toronto Police and Mental Health Nurses. The following hospitals are participating in this program: Humber River Hospital, St. Joseph's Health Centre, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto East General Hospital, The Scarborough Hospital, and North York General Hospital.

Please contact your primary care provider or see the 'Adult Couple Therapy Handout', 'Crisis Resources Handout' and 'Child and Youth Therapy Handout' for more information on mental health resources. The Taddle Creek Mental Health Team (including Sarah Wash and Kim Sedore) are happy to provide support with a referral from your family doctor or nurse practitioner.