



Maintaining a leadership compass

Navigating professional boundaries for hospice leaders

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Learning Objectives

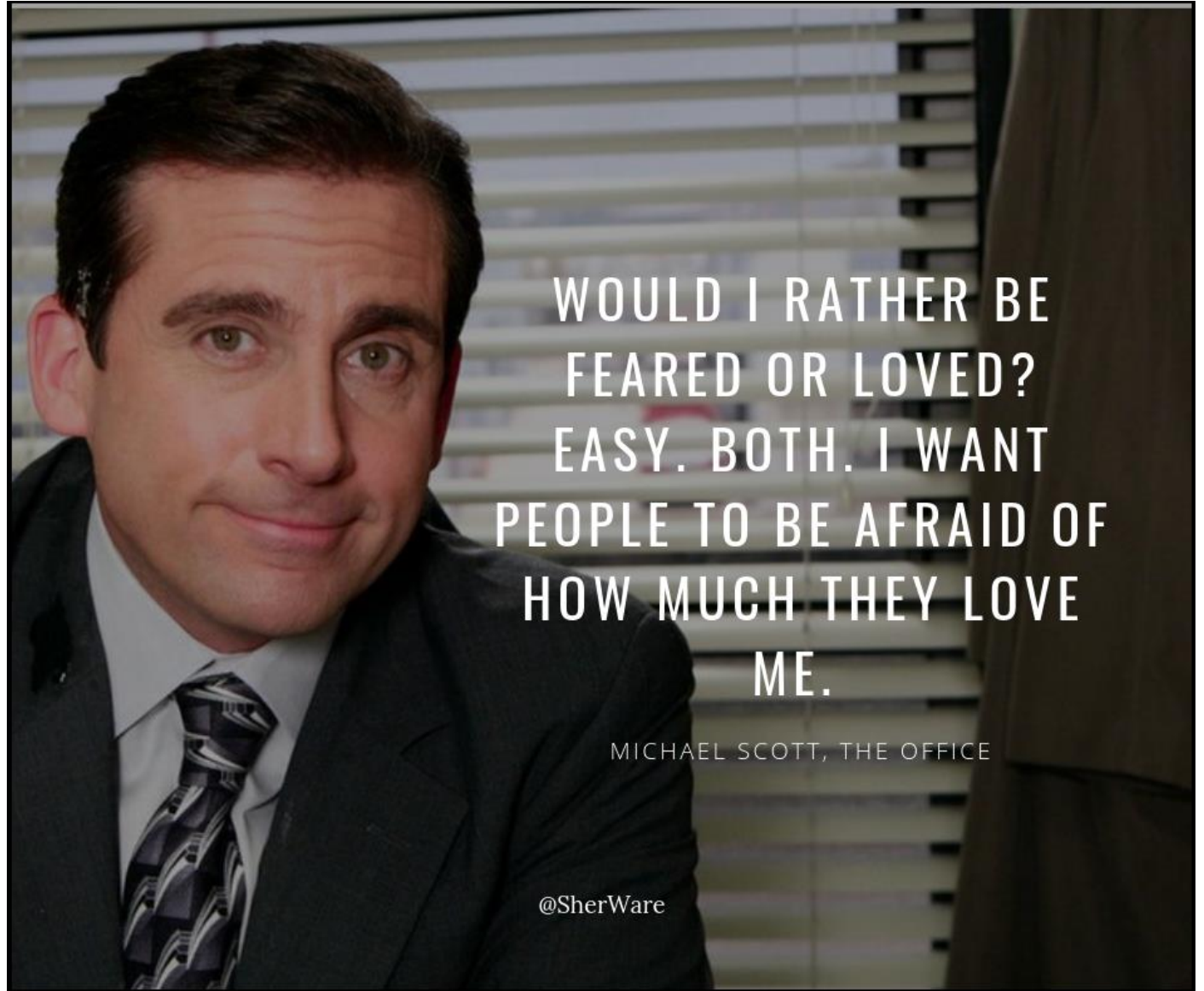
Upon completing this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the importance of establishing clear professional boundaries as a hospice leader
2. Explain ways effective boundary-setting impacts compassion fatigue and burnout
3. Understand the potential impact of social media on professional relationships

Classic Boundary Lessons

- Mrs. Johnson who is always the perfect hostess offers Cindy a cup of coffee every time she visits. Cindy accepts the coffee and then starts her care after her coffee and brief chat with Mrs. Johnson.
 - Mr. Johnson has been on service for over a year now. Mrs. Johnson who is 85 and very small is getting more and more fatigued and is showing signs of her own decline. Despite this, she continues to make sure Cindy has a cup of coffee at every visit.
- Is this a boundary issue?
 - Why?

Leadership



WOULD I RATHER BE
FEARED OR LOVED?
EASY. BOTH. I WANT
PEOPLE TO BE AFRAID OF
HOW MUCH THEY LOVE
ME.

MICHAEL SCOTT, THE OFFICE

@SherWare

Boundary Definition

- Something (such as a river, a fence, or an imaginary line) that shows where an area ends, and another area begins
- a point or limit that indicates where two things become different
- unofficial rules about what should not be done: limits that define acceptable behavior



Professional boundaries

What are Professional Boundaries?

- Mutually understood physical and emotional limits of the leader and employees, and the leader and the agency.
- The professional space between leaders and employees to avoid inappropriate or unethical practice within an organizational framework
- Limits to allow for safe connections and interactions between the leader and employees
- Clearly define what **is** ok and what **is not** okay and **why**
- Clarity of the limits and responsibilities of your role as a leader
- Ability to provide empathic listening and honest feedback to employees, not acting as a therapist or rescuer

What are Professional Boundaries?

- **Being friendly**, not friends.
 - If you are “friends” - being respectful and professional while at work and leaving “friendships” outside of work
- Ability to know where your professional responsibilities end, and personal accountability begins
- Boundaries build trust by providing clear guidance and consistency
- Establishes healthy professional practices for the leader

“You get what you create and you get what you allow.” ~ Dr. Henry Cloud

Importance of professional boundaries

- Role model healthy communication, professional relationships, and respecting boundaries set by others
- Promote healthy communication and conflict resolution that allows each person to grow as a professional
- Allows time for developing and implementing strategies
- Staying focused on one's responsibilities as a leader while not becoming enmeshed with employees' behaviors or reactions
- Component of honesty and trust building

I don't want you to save
me.

I want you to stand by
my side while I save
myself.

Ethical Dilemmas

- Confidentiality
- Gifts
- Dual relationships
- Core values and beliefs
- Laws and regulations
- Agency policies and procedures



Boundaries in Hospice Leadership



- We work in an emotionally charged environment
 - Can trigger one's own feelings and responses
 - Mortality & previous loss history
 - Decision making
 - Identity
 - Acceptance/likability

Why are boundaries difficult to maintain?

- Conflicts in understanding: your employee's choices, feelings, lifestyle, beliefs and/or circumstances conflict with your values and/or clinical knowledge
- Perfectionism: the need to not let anyone down
- Social conditioning: the expectation to nurture and tend to other's emotions
- Compassion fatigue: “a state of exhaustion and dysfunction biologically, psychologically, and socially as a result of prolonged exposure to compassion stress and all it invokes”
- “Hero” role: the leader's need to “save” the employees
- Poor teamwork – The leader believes that he or she can finish the work faster or better if done themselves instead of taking the time to teach and mentor the employee.


How do boundary issues/violations happen?

- What are MY unmet needs?
- Where am I vulnerable?
- What wounds do I have?
- What are my motivations, my causes, or my reasons?
- Does this serve the best interests of the employee or agency?



Characteristics of rescuers

- Provide quick fixes
- Take ownership of things they don't own
- Feel caught in the middle
- Drained from resentment
- Hide the truth to protect people
- Like to control the show
- Difficult watching less competent people learn new skills
- Obsess about other people's problems
- Get angry when others don't take their advice
- Difficulty saying "no"



Health care providers are a unique kind.
They have this insatiable need to care
for others, which is both their greatest
strength and fatal flaw.

Leader/Employee Relationships

A CONTINUUM OF PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

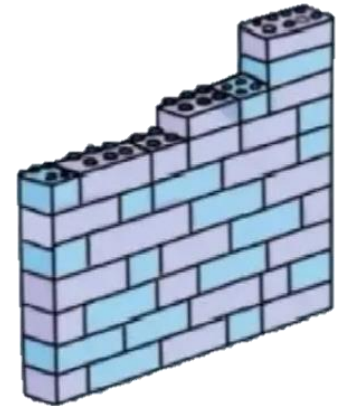


Over involvement

- Can include micromanaging
- Over functioning can feel like distrust
- Does not allow for development of critical thinking and leadership skills
- Creates a dependency on the leader
- Erodes confidence
- Stunts decision making
- Stifles employee growth



WE THINK OF FAILURE AND
SUCCESS AS OPPOSITES



WHEN IN REALITY FAILURE
IS PART OF SUCCESS

Under involvement

- Do not respond or listen to feedback and adjust accordingly
- Employees feeling a lack of direction regarding their work
- Lack of leadership guidance
- Culture that does not encourage employees to provide ideas or suggestions
- Skip meetings or other opportunities to communicate
- Fail to respond to emails or other attempts at communication

Consequences of poor boundaries:

- Burnout and/or compassion fatigue
- Potential for triangulation or splitting of team members
- Impact on professional decision making
- Team members can feel betrayed or abandoned
- Team members can feel set up for failure if leader is a “rescuer”
- Leader could violate professional ethical standards
- May be emotionally traumatized and/or put in danger

WHEN WE SHOULD
TAKE A BREAK



WHEN WE ACTUALLY
TAKE A BREAK



LIZ FOSSLIE

Consequences of poor boundaries:

- In the leader/employee relationship there is an inherent imbalance of power and authority
- There is potential to innocently or inadvertently cause harm.
 - We possess that potential through entering into actions and behaviors we *think* and *believe* are innocent.
 - We enter into those actions and behaviors because we care about the people we lead and those we work with.
- Reputation of the agency can be put at risk
- Boundaries are important to protect the team, protect the employee, and to protect the leader

*"Restore connection' is not just for devices.
It is for people too.
If we cannot disconnect, we cannot lead."*

~Arianna Huffington (Author)

**Leadership is not about doing more.
It's about shifting from doing to leading.
From this point forward, the tasks you let
go of can define you more as a leader than
what you take on.**

~Jo Miller, CEO, Be Leaderly

Signs of boundary issues



One or two people have too much power (formal/informal) which allows for dysfunction of the team

Plans and decisions come slow due to a need for consensus

There is an unspoken tolerance for mediocrity or even poor performance

No focus on what drives results by teams and employees

Pettiness, blame, and passive-aggressive behaviors replace health problem solving

Accountability is not truly practiced

There can be a culture of victim mentality – things happen “to” you or as a result of someone else’s actions

There is a lack of celebrations of “wins.”



**I'M STRONGER BECAUSE I HAD
TO BE. I'M SMARTER BECAUSE OF
MY MISTAKES. I'M HAPPIER
BECAUSE I HAVE OVERCOME THE
SADNESS I'VE KNOWN,
AND I'M WISER BECAUSE I HAVE
LEARNED FROM MY LIFE.**

- UNKNOWN

Supportive Boundaries

- Help employees focus their attention
- Build a culture that drives functioning as a result of a safe emotional climate
- Build sacred space where negativity and helplessness thought patterns are limited
- Facilitate connections that empower energy and momentum
- Identify ways that you can empower employees to take control of activities that drive results
- Be curious
- Don't take it personally

Protective Boundaries

- Protect your time to reduce frequent interruptions while still supporting your team.
 - Proactively engage your team
 - Schedule your tasks into your workday
 - Be most available to your employees when you know they need you
 - Embrace moments of time for yourself
 - Respect the team's boundaries
 - Initiate a conversation early

“Lessons learned: Leaders have the ABILITY to bring joy” (Mularz, 2023)

A is for Affirmative framework

B is for Boundary clarity

I is for Inspiration

L is for Listening

I is for Initiative

T is for Thinking

Y is for You



OLGA_C/SHUTTERSTOCK

Boundaries and Social Media

Social media use

- More millennials are entering the healthcare workforce
- Social media use is integrated into daily life
- Many academic programs incorporate social media into distance learning via interactive online learning environments
- Policies and procedures regarding the use of social media for healthcare organizations



Social media violations



Citadel Winston-Salem — TikTok 2021

Spectrum Health — Instagram 2021

Ballad Health — Online 2020

Lincoln Hospital — YouTube 2020

Hospital Corporation of America — Facebook group 2020

Elite Dental Associates — Yelp 2019

Glenview Nursing Home — Snapchat 2019

Northwestern Medical Regional Group — Twitter 2019

South Carolina Hospice/Home Healthcare — Instagram direct message 2018

Leadership Challenges in Social Media



Violation of Fair
Labor Practices



Impact on
work/life balance



Impact on
Company
Culture

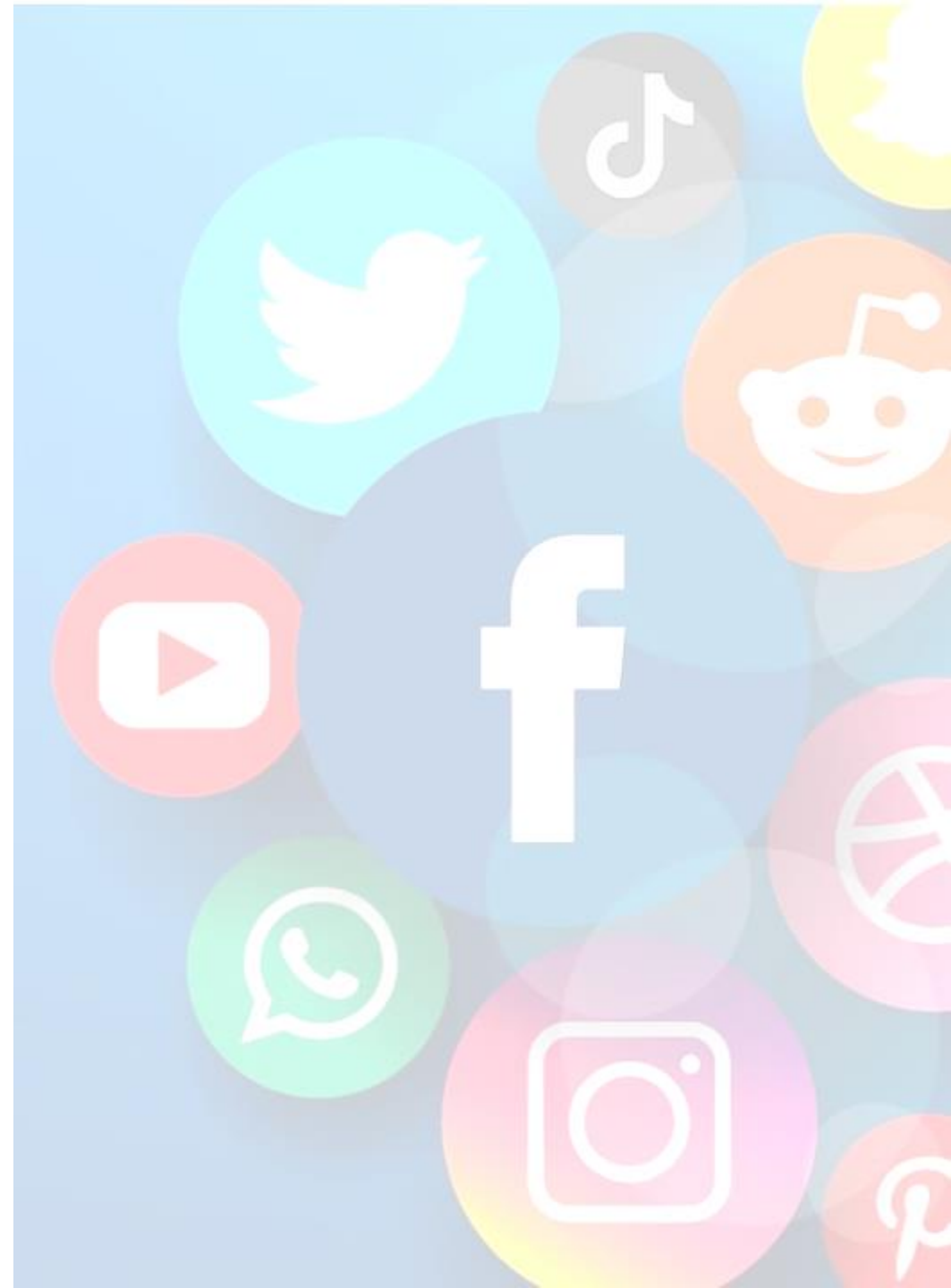


Engaging in controversial
comments



Risk of misinterpretation

Photo: <https://bigthink.com/the-present/social-media-distorts-reality/>



To Friend or Not to Friend

Before clicking "Accept"

- What is my intent in creating this connection?
- Is accepting in the employee's best interest?
- Am I accepting for the employee's benefit or my benefit?
- Are there institutional guidelines?
- Is there a better alternative?

Reconsidering after accepting

- How do I gracefully "unfriend" to minimize damage?
- Has my online communication detracted from my ability to lead, mentor, coach or to correct if needed?
- Have I considered the affect this may have on other employees or colleagues?

Making a "Go" of social media

- Know your audience-social sites may better reach young adults
- Institutions should consider guidelines for success while minimizing risks to professional relationships
- Utilize ability to quickly disseminate information



Information you may discover about an employee

Inappropriate
behavior

Trashing
talking the
company

Breach of
confidentiality

Spreading mis-
information

Health
conditions

Conflicts with
Colleagues

Dilemmas raised:

- Should I report or document it?
- Should I confront the employee?
- What do I say, if anything?
- Are there negative consequences of doing nothing?
- Does this change my view of the employee?
- Could this affect our professional relationship?
- Would I be able to treat this employee the same as others?

Information an employee may discover about you

Personal issues	Relationship status	Religious or political affiliations	Associations with others
Statements about the job	Unprofessional images	Health issues	Lifestyle choices

Dilemmas raised:

- Could my social media violate agency rules?
- Could this affect the employee's view of me as a professional?
- Might the employee contact me personally outside of work?
- Could this affect my professional rapport with the employee?
- Could information learned about my life outside of work negatively affect my reputation?

Conclusion

- It is important to establish professional boundaries as they protect and support the leader, the team, the agency and patients/families
- Implement leadership boundary training to reduce burnout and compassion fatigue
- Have 21st-century social media policies

Scenario 1

A new referral comes into the office at 3:30 for a patient who will arrive home at 4:30. The nurse already has an admission scheduled for the evening. Sally is on the schedule for back up admissions, but she tells the manager that her son has a school event and she cannot do the admission. Betty, the manager ends up going out to do the admission herself even though she has been the manager on call all week and has been called the last 2 nights.

- Is this a boundary issue?
- Why?

Scenario 2

- Sandy and Jenny have worked together for a number of years and consider themselves “friends” in and outside of work. One day, Sandy was telling Jenny how frustrated she was that Linda, one of the other staff members had not “finished” what she saw to be Linda’s work for the day.
 - Jenny decides to call Gerry the manager and tell her about the concerns around Linda’s inability to do her work every day. She says that if something isn’t done soon, the agency could lose Sandy.
- Is this a boundary issue?
 - Why?

Scenario 3

- Sara has been the professional caring for Mrs. Smith for many months. Recently Mrs. Smith has taken a turn for the worse and Sara takes this very hard. She openly sobs at the patient's bedside and the MSW has to console her and ask her to step out of the room as she was upsetting the family. Later the MSW reports this to the manager.
 - The manager tells the MSW that she is being unreasonable and cold, that Sarah is a very kind nurse, and she has a very close bond with Mrs. Smith.
- Is this a boundary issue?
 - Why?

Scenario 4

- Sally has worked for John for 7 years. She has 5 children and usually has some crisis happening in her life for which she visits his office weekly and has an emotional break down. He finds himself moving assignments and duties to help support her while she tries to get her life together.
- Is this a boundary issue?
- Why?

Scenario 5

- Kelly and Julie share a particular patient on opposite days. Their styles are very different, but the patient and family do not seem to mind. Kelly who is outspoken goes to the manager to report she she thinks the patient would benefit from more consistency and continuity of care and asks to have the patient assigned to her 5 days a week. She talks about how Julie does not know how to care for this patient properly. Kelly has been with the hospice for 12 years while Julie joined just a year ago.
 - The manager agrees to give Kelly the patient
 - By giving Kelly the patient, she has also given her the increased visits which puts Julie's hours below full time..
- Is this a boundary issue?
 - Why?

Scenario 6

- Ellie the hospice aide has been with the company for 15 years. Every Thursday she comes into the office at 8:00 am to pick up supplies. Shelly the manager stops her in the kitchen and has a cup of coffee with her each week.
 - Is this a boundary issue?
 - Why?

Scenario 7

- During a meeting, Simon the manager notices that Carrie is quieter than usual and sitting in the back of the class. As he is leading the meeting he asks her if she is feeling “ok.”
 - Is this a boundary issue?
 - Why?

Scenario 8

- Bryan has a weekly telephone meeting with his direct employees. During these calls he often brings up that “some people” on the team have issues with “productivity.” He tells the group that they need to come up with a solution as a team to increase the overall visit numbers or their team bonus could be impacted, and he will be in trouble with his boss.
 - Is this a boundary issue?
 - Why?

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Thank you!

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