



THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS  
EVERY PASTORAL CARE FACILITATOR  
NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT RELATIONSHIP...

# Boundaries

TIP SHEET

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# Relational Dynamics

When entering into, maintaining, or terminating a pastoral care relationship with an individual, couple or family, there are a number of important ethical issues that need to be considered. To ensure all parties benefit from the pastoral care process, potential problems need to be identified in advance. Setting up operational boundaries is central to the “helping” process for the following reasons:

LEVEL OF TRUST	MOTIVATION	PERSONAL VALUES
<p>To what degree do the people you work with feel safe to disclose personal information, trust it will be held in confidence, and believe in your competency to help facilitate desired outcomes?</p>	<p>What level of participation do people have in working with you (and through their issues)? How willing are they to engage problem-solving activities aimed at addressing and resolving personal concerns?</p>	<p>Are your values compatible with those you work with, and do they lend credibility to your role as a facilitator? To what extent are your values on display in your life example and modest personal disclosure?</p>
CONSULTATION MODALITY	OUTCOMES SATISFACTION	PERSONAL IMPACT
<p>How productive are your consultations (i.e. open, friendly, cooperative, mature and/or respectful versus derogative, hostile, withdrawn, dishonouring and/or manipulative)?</p>	<p>To what degree are measurable pastoral care objectives consistently met? How satisfied are people with the discipleship ‘process’ when resolving personal issues/concerns?</p>	<p>At the end of any given consultation, how overwhelmed, disillusioned, and burdened, or relieved, reassured, and positively encouraged do people feel? How do you feel?</p>

**Your role as facilitator of pastoral care is only as effective as the quality of the relationship you establish with the people you work with**

# Consultation Guideline

Given the importance of relationship quality in any pastoral care setting, it is necessary for facilitators to establish their own personal guidelines for both one-on-one and group consultations. Your values should serve as the practical criteria upon which you make decisions. Communicating that your consultation guidelines are designed to preserve and protect a healthy relationship dynamic, helps establish deeper trust with the people you work with. When communicating in an open and up-front manner, you model that honesty is an effective way to address difficult issues. Sharing the values that govern how you work also contributes to the level of confidence people have in your ability to serve and support them. When establishing consultation guidelines consider the following:

<b>CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	Communicate how personal and/or private information will be treated. Are there limitations to confidentiality?
<b>COMPETENCY</b>	Communicate competency strengths and limitations; areas of experience and/or training (or lack thereof).
<b>COMFORT ZONE</b>	Communicating areas (demographics/topics/themes) that you do and do not feel comfortable working with.
<b>EXPECTATIONS</b>	Communicate your own expectations (i.e. pastoral care process, relationship dynamic, consultation attendance).
<b>ETHICAL/LEGAL OBLIGATIONS</b>	Communicate your obligations when criminal activity is disclosed, or threat/harm is indicated (to self or others).
<b>ACCESS</b>	Communicate duration/location of meetings, and when, how often and by what means can contact be made.



# Know your Limitations

It is important to recognise your own competency and comfort limitations in facilitating pastoral care. You may be particularly good at working with youth, but struggle when working with adults (or vice versa). You may find it easy to talk about feelings of sadness or worry but uncomfortable talking about issues involving sex or drug use. You may feel confident working with people of similar age but intimidated when working with people who have considerably more life experience than you. You also may have a strong ethical or moral stance when it comes to specific issues, and therefore, may find it difficult remaining impartial or non-judgemental when discussing certain topics. Identify these in advance and either capitalise your strengths, or intentionally work on expanding your confidence and competence. From the following list, identify the people/concerns you would feel most comfortable working with:

DEMOGRAPHICS		CLIENT CONCERNS		MORAL/SPIRITUAL DILEMMAS	
Child		Terminal illness		Infidelity	
Teenager		Suicidal ideation		Angry with God	
Young Adult		Relationship issues		Lust/Pornography	
Adult		Tragedy/Grief/Loss		Fragile faith	
Senior		Emotional distress		Sexuality issues	
Couple		Anger/Aggression		Progressive ideology	
Parent/Family		Financial concerns		Deception/Theft	
Divorced/Widow		Behaviour issues		Unplanned pregnancy	



**NOTE:**

Should there be demographics, concerns or dilemmas that are outside of your competency or comfort zone, openly communicate these limitations, and either (a) agree to work only on areas you feel confident to address, or (b) refer the client on to a better suited facilitator.

# Duty of Care

Confidentiality is a powerful way of building trust and establishing rapport. However, there may be organisational, moral and/or legal limitations to the level of confidentiality you can offer. The status you have as a minister of religion (or member of the clergy), the professional qualifications you may possess and the jurisdiction in which you work, may all influence the degree to which confidentiality will be a morally or legally binding obligation. As a pastoral care facilitator, you need to know the definitions, rights and responsibilities you have. You also need to be aware of times when you may have an ethical or legal “duty of care” that warrants a breach of confidentiality. Such occasions may include:

01	When a client has expressed suicidal or homicidal ideation
02	When you suspect the abuse of a spouse or a minor
03	When you are informed of a serious crime that has been committed
04	When you are ordered to testify in a Court of Law
05	When parents/legal guardians enquire about the wellbeing of their child (minor)



**NOTE:** Confidentiality limitations should be communicated at the outset of any pastoral care relationship.