



Honouring the Past, Transforming the Future



Therapeutic Boundaries & Limits: *It's a reciprocal relationship!*

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Setting the scene



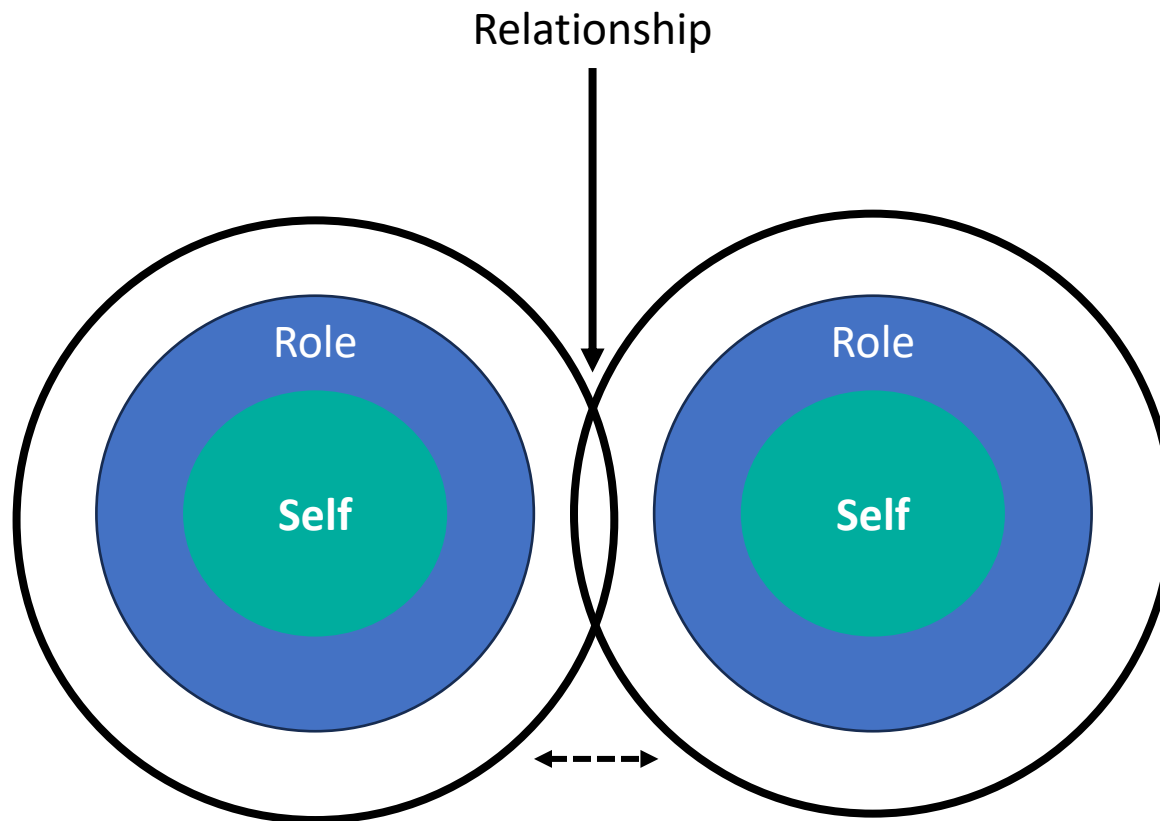


The paradox of therapeutic relationships

- Therapeutic relationships occur between professional and client.
- And yet, often involve sharing the deepest, hardest, and most vulnerable experiences.
- Therapeutic relationships can only build trust when there are genuine human-to-human interactions.
- And yet, there is an obvious power differential and the desire for connection can be a strong pull (boundary transgressions can be a very slippery slope).
- Therapeutic relationships are a microcosm for where corrective learning can occur.
- And yet, we sometimes need to risk disappointing by expressing our limits and boundaries to allow this learning to occur.

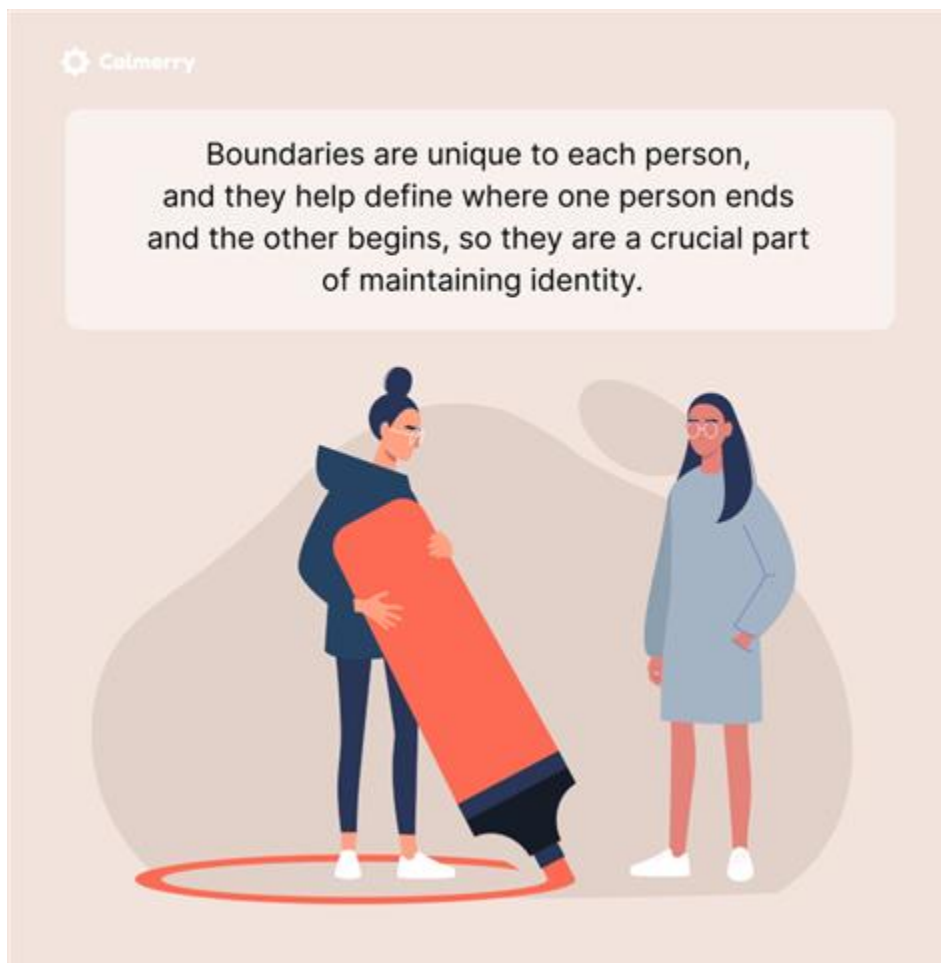


Boundaries: Context is everything





Why is this so important???



Principles of healthy boundaries

- Consistency and predictability
- Clear and reasonable
- Flexible at times
- Communicated with compassion
- Context bound: there will be non-negotiables
- Reciprocal and dynamic





Differentiating Boundaries & Limits

Boundaries: define the parameters of a person, their “space” (physical, emotional, interpersonal, cognitive etc) from others. They help us know who we are to each other, and help us decide:

- What we can and cannot do for the other
- What we can and cannot ask of the other
- What we can and cannot disclose to the other
- What we can and cannot give to the other

Limits: define the natural limitations of the relationship, according to the relationship’s context. They help us identify:

- When we need to say no to a request (and why)
- When something cannot be tolerated (personally or organisationally)



Boundaries: Finding the balance





Boundaries: Reciprocity

- Therapeutic relationships are most effective when it is built on the foundation of being a **real relationship between equals**.
- Identity is built and maintained when boundaries are respected.
- People with BPD and CPTSD both have difficulties with their sense of self (identity), which makes helping them to identify boundaries, communicate these and maintain these **crucial**.
- It is our **mutual responsibility** to invite and encourage boundaries, and respect these when identified.





Inviting boundaries & limits

When this is important:

- In setting up the relational contract / structure
- Repairing ruptures
- Negotiating transitions and endings

Ways to invite this:

- *“What do you need from me...”*
- *“What has worked well for you in the past...”*
- *“What has been unhelpful for you in the past...”*
- *“What do you think will work best for you...”*



Some questions for you...

What are some ways you invite and encourage boundaries to be set with you by your clients?

What are ways we can “hear” someone’s boundaries when they are unable to verbalise them?





In summary

- **Consistent and predictable** boundaries are essential to the formation of a therapeutic relationship.
- Modelling formation and maintenance of boundaries helps people to **feel safe** in a relationship and develop their own sense of self within relationships.
- Ensure boundaries are not **too rigid** or **too open/porous** and be reasonable with setting any limits, whilst being open to being flexible when the relational need arises.
- Inviting people to **set boundaries with us** and respecting these when they are communicated is crucial.
- Self-Awareness and seeking supervision is important to ensure we **stay in role and do not slip** down the slope towards transgressing boundaries.

THANK YOU

