

The Helper-Client Relationship

What constitutes a healthy helper-client relationship?

The following are key:

- Maintaining a professional relationship.
- Setting parameters on how services are delivered.
- Being aware of the inherent power imbalance.
- Being aware of your own potential conflict of interest: what are you getting out of helping?
- Being guided by what is in the best interest of the client, while not losing sight of how, ultimately...
 - You need to maintain self-care as the helper; and/ or
 - How your help to one particular client might affect the organization—in terms of risk, reputation & resource management.

The following can lead to—or are in and of themselves--boundary crossings or violations:

- Being too familiar with a client—emotionally or physically
- Blurring the lines between professional and friend;
- Intimate relationships—sexual or otherwise;
- Sharing personal information or experiences so that clients can relate – if those experiences aren't firmly in the past, and resolved for you (otherwise, the client may feel you need support)

Being appropriately involved, ie. In the zone of helpfulness below (or, as Vikki Reynolds refers to it, “The Zone of Fabulousness”)

Being appropriately involved is about figuring out what is neither under-involved or over-involved—and ties back to the “ultimately” part of our key question, *“Is my behaviour appropriate and, ultimately, helpful?”*

