

Chapter 11

Working With Clients and Their Families

Your Relationship With the Client

- *A relationship* is the connection between two or more people and is shaped by the roles, feelings, and interactions of those involved
 - Personal relationships
 - Professional relationships
 - It is unethical to mix a professional relationship with a personal relationship.
 - See textbook *Table 11.1: Professional Supportive Relationships Versus Friendships*

Professional Boundaries (1 of 3)

- These are limitations on behaviour, meant to protect vulnerable clients from the caregiver who has access to private knowledge about them.
- When one person is dependent upon another, the balance of power may not be equal.
 - Being aware and trying to make allowances for potential imbalances of power is important in maintaining professional boundaries.

Professional Boundaries (2 of 3)

- You do not have the right to force a client to do anything they do not wish to do.
- Maintain confidentiality:
 - You are caring for clients when they are at their most vulnerable
 - See textbook box: *Supporting Mrs. Chase: Maintaining Professional Boundaries*

Professional Boundaries (3 of 3)

- Establish a professional helping relationship to help the client.
 - Demonstrate the following:
 - Respect
 - Compassion
 - See textbook box: *Supporting Mark Vickers: Showing Compassion*
 - Empathy
 - Sympathy
 - Competence
 - Self-awareness
 - See textbook box: *Supporting Mr. Raftis: The Need for Self-Awareness*

Independence, Dependence, Interdependence (1 of 2)

- *Independence*: A state of not relying on others for control or authority (ability to direct one's own life)
- *Dependence*: A state of relying on others for support and being unable to manage without help
- *Interdependence*: A state of relying on one another (each person relies on the other for some things)

Independence, Dependence, Interdependence (2 of 2)

- These are fundamental concepts in the professional helping relationship.
- An important goal of most clients is to achieve or maintain as much independence as possible.
 - As a support worker, you must respect your client's choices.
 - Clients must never feel that you are judging their decisions.

Self-Esteem

- What makes clients feel good about themselves?
- Self-esteem can suffer when independence is limited or lost.
- Offer encouragement and praise the client's successes.
- Finding one's purpose can increase confidence.
- Offer honest feedback in a gentle, supportive manner.

The Balance of Power in a Professional Relationship

- When one person is dependent on another, the balance of power may not be equal.
 - In some situations, it may lead to the stronger person abusing the dependent person.
- Be aware of your “power” in the professional relationship.
- Whenever possible, involve the client in solving problems and in making decisions that may arise.

The Client's Family

- A *family* is biological, legal, or social network of people who provide support for one another.
- Families can take many different forms
 - Your client will determine who he or she regards as family members.

Your Role in Assisting the Family

- You may assist the family in many different ways:
 - You may care for a new mother and baby, toddlers or older children
- *Primary caregiver*: The person who assumes responsibilities for caring for person with illness/disability in the person's home
 - You may assist primary caregiver by providing respite
 - See textbook box: *Focus On Home Care: Assisting the Primary Caregiver*

Families in Conflict (1 of 3)

- When illness or disability occurs, the stress on all family members may be great and all have to cope with conflict.
- Conflicts may take the form of expressions of irritation, anger, bickering, and arguments.
- Conflicts may sometimes be hidden.
- Sometimes members of the health care team can help families resolve difficulties by encouraging communication or defusing tense situations.

Families in Conflict (2 of 3)



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Families in Conflict (3 of 3)

- You must observe and report on family interactions, and also be alert for signs of abuse.
 - Refer to textbook box: *Case Study: Family Conflict*