

Creating Healthy Boundaries with Athletes”

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The Purpose

- Personal Liability
- Business Liability
- Creates Defined Lines
- Removes the Questions
- Protection for Colleagues
- Professionalism
- Helps children grow into a person who defines their own boundaries

When Media Normalizes Boundary Violations

Monica: So how did you guys meet?

Frank: Well um, I was in Mrs. Knight's—
ah, I mean Alice, sorry. Alice. I always
do that. I was in her Home Ec class.

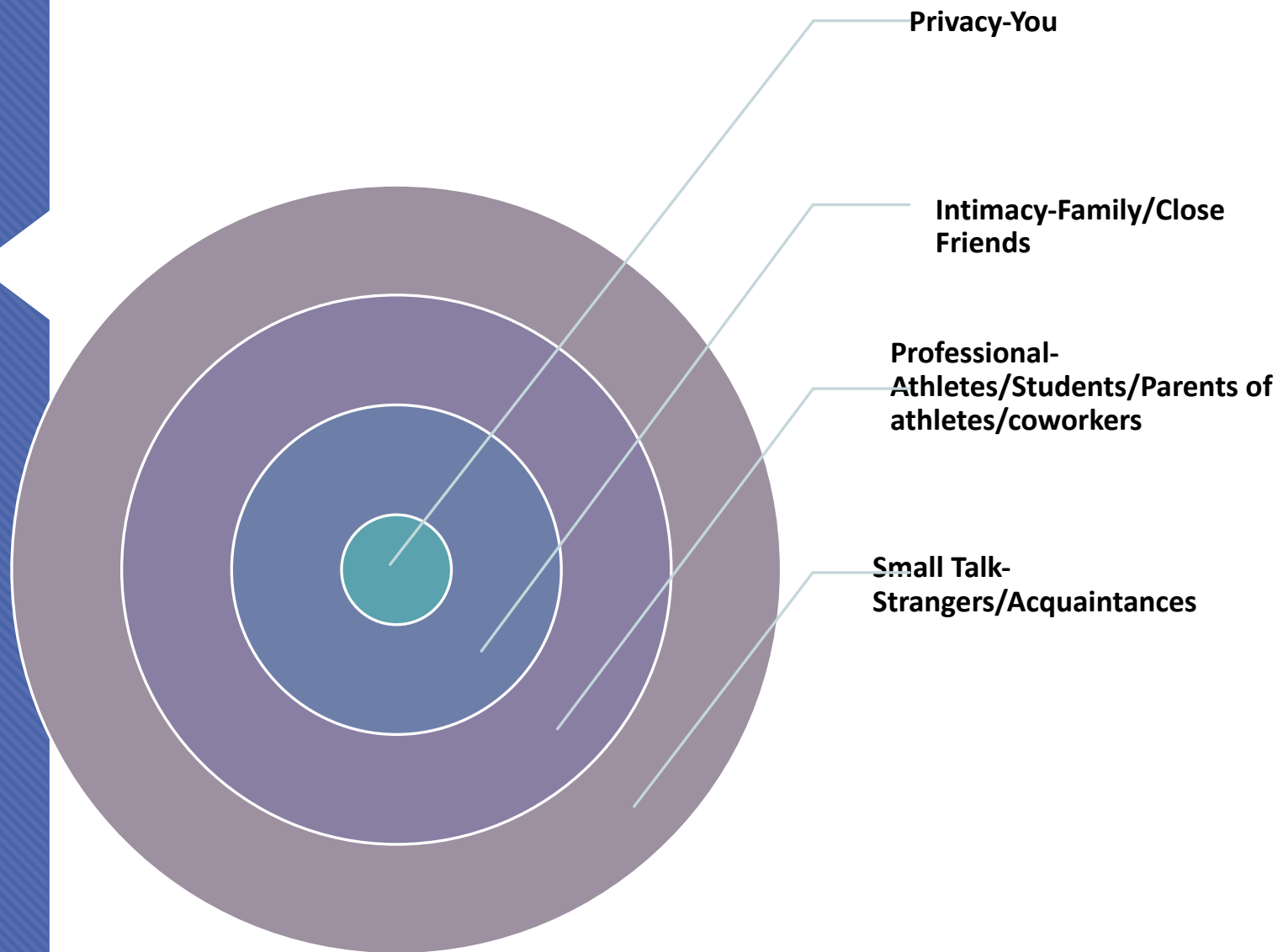
Alice: And he was my best student.

Frank: Yeah, she was my best teacher.



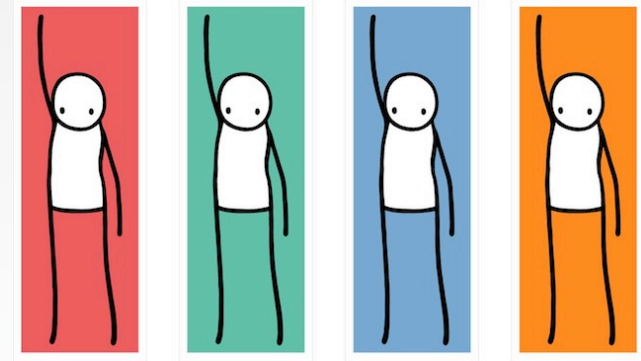
Your Boundary Circle

Boundaries define areas of privacy and helps set standards as the coaching/athlete relationship grows stronger over time.



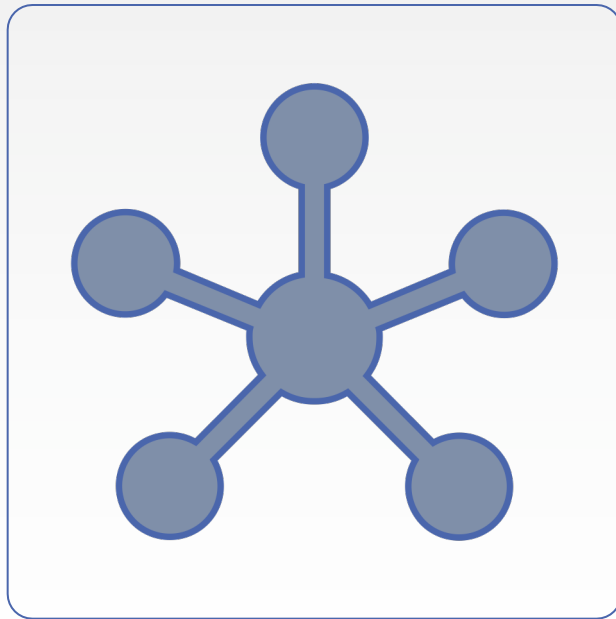
Line of Site

Simply put, all interactions with athletes must be able to be observable and interruptible by another person and remain professional at all times.



What can you see from your physical location? What is your awareness level?

It's All About Boundaries



A boundary is a personal space that you keep between yourself and others. It defines "where I end and you begin."

Interactions

Social

Emotional

Physical

Verbal

Information Sharing...When It's Too Much

Discussing

Discussing personal lifestyle details such as:

- Intimate relationships
- Politics
- Any identifying information that normally wouldn't be shared in a professional environment
- Information inappropriate for children

Showing

Showing photos that depict locations such as bedrooms, bars, or gatherings that reveal personal information

Venturing

Venturing out of the scope of practice

Language too mature or “just in fun”

Profanity

Words or conversations of a sexual nature

Suggestive humor

Names that are endearing and suggestive in nature

- “Hey Beautiful”, “Hey Sunshine,”

Comments related to appearance that appear innocent in nature

- “Love that shirt. You should wear it more often.”

Space and Touch

- Unprofessional Touch such as a touching of the shoulders or back
- Giving corrections with an unnatural closeness

Ways
Interactions
are Initially
Breeched by
the Coach

What do Healthy Boundaries Look Like

The coach-athlete relationship is not equal in terms of power and you are not their friend.

Fair



Consistent



Boundaries Change with the Age of the Child

Self Awareness

- What is your mood?
- Are you struggling with anything of seriousness in your life?
- Are you overwhelmed?
- Are you lonely?
- Do you have friends in your life to share your successes and failures?
- Do you have interests outside of your coaching responsibilities?



Transference

This occurs for a number of reasons:

- Proximity
- Time spent within that proximity
- Sharing emotions, life history, past traumas, etc.
- Helping the athlete during stressful or extreme times
- Crossing out of scope of practice from coach to counselor

Transference occurs when a person begins to experience unconscious feelings about the coach as either a parent or partner.

Where the Boundaries Begin to Erode

It starts simple:

- Friending on social media
- Sharing phone numbers
- Finding time alone while remaining in the club environment
- Sharing personal email addresses
- Small gifts such as a soda after practice or a small gift for a job well done, that IS NOT part of club policy

Social Boundaries

Social Boundaries are how you interact in your world.

- Personal Hangouts
- Politics
- Religious Beliefs
- Lifestyle
- Personal Relationships
- Social Media Relationships

Emotional Boundaries

- Feelings
- Relationships
- Information Sharing
- Personal secrets
- Private club and staff information
- Private jokes, sarcasm



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Physical Boundaries

- Touch
- Space
- Proximity
- Home
- Car
- Hotel rooms



When you suspect a colleague of violating their professional boundaries

Watch for the following signs:

- Spending more time with one athlete over others
- Athletes using the word, “Favorite”
- A specific athlete being discussed in meetings and during social gatherings more than usual
- Closed door meetings
- Nervousness when spotted talking with a specific athlete

Confront, Report, Document

When the Child Violates Set Boundaries

Set the boundaries at the very beginning

Explain why the professional relationship is so important

Help them understand why you can't be friends

Include the parents if and when necessary

Show them from the beginning that all interactions will be open and interruptible

If there is a gift given that isn't related to an appropriate time of the year such as Christmas and if that gift isn't appropriate, then it needs to be returned with kindness and empathy.

Always reinforce the boundaries and watch for transference



Keeping Your Boundaries with the Parents

Professionalism with parents allows for objective distance so both parties understand where the lines are drawn between roles.

To maintain an objective relationship with parents, both parties should agree to the following:

Time when it's appropriate to talk

Place where it's appropriate to talk

Respect for each other's role

Respect for each other's time

Respect for each other's money

When the Athlete Transitions to Coach

Immediate Training Needs:

Social Media: Transferring from athlete to coach

Confidentiality

Appropriate conversation and touch/1:1

Mandated reporting

Documentation

Interacting with athletes who are friends

Supervision:

Heightened guidance

Daily check-in's on challenges

Conversations with parents should occur with a more experienced coach or manager

Spot check while coaching



Thank you!

For more information or to schedule a tailored training:

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