

# “The Offer is Important”

## A Boundaries Message For “Family Services” Staff.

I am not going to make this a complicated conversion into a family services version. There are several ways this could apply to your agency. I trust that as a family services worker you will be able to see where it's relevant.

Let me sum one thing up though for you that you can base your strategy with clients on.

### Summary:

1. Anything left **unsaid** is causing **great harm** and **confusion** in your agency and with your clients.
2. You need to hammer out very **clear rules** and **expectations** and say every word, post it up on the **wall**, and get the clients to carry a **copy** in their binder, and have the clients repeat the rule to you when they break it.
3. **Offer a few positives** ways you are going to **support them** in achieving a goal that's important to them. Simple ways, each time they take an action step you can match their step with your own effort. You can even go a little beyond your typical responsibilities and make this a semi-personal **offer** to them. Use your agencies resources, but make it a deal just between you and that client.

### Call to Action:

1. Take one page of paper and draw a horizontal line across the middle of it.
2. On the top section write “How I support you”, on the bottom section write the title “My boundaries”
3. Under how I support you:
  - a. Write two things you would be willing do for your client, make it specific to them.
  - i. EX: If you attend every counselling session, make a resume all by yourself on the computer, I will edit it and be a character reference. I can also give you transportation to drop 5 resumes off.

- ii. EX: If you make a list of 5 places and people who will tempt you to get intoxicated or high this weekend and explain to me 1 reason why each of these people and places is so tempting to you, I will brainstorm with you 5 alternative places and people you can be with and contribute these resources to help you get there:
    - 1. A ride there and back
    - 2. Some free movie passes.
    - 3. Will phone and talk to some of the adults at the alternative location, and help arrange fun activities.
    - 4. Will call some people I know and recommend you to a big brother or sister or a mentorship program.
- 4. Under My boundaries:
  - a. Write two or 3 things that you simply you won't have in your agency or in your relationship to your client.
  - b. EX: In my counselling session when I say our session is starting at 10 am I don't mean wander in at 10:15am do you understand? ½ hour at the end of day helping me organize my book shelf to fix this.
  - c. EX: Assignments for you to complete after our discussions are due when they are due. We do not meet here, or provide you resources for our own entertainment. If you do not have "this and that" complete, then we will pull your funding and you can make rent on your own.
- 5. Wait until your client makes a simple mistake. Then pull out your one page agreement and offer it to your client in a very non democratic way but loving like "Ghandi". Put it on the table tell them this is what you're going to do to bring you both closer to understanding each other and forming a team.
- 6. Ask them to sign and date it with you and then you both follow it, especially you.
- 7. If the client refuses or waivers let them know the second offense will include them writing an apology letter to you, and if they don't do that they can come up a 10 minute explanation of why you should continue giving resources and assistance to them.
- 8. CATCH: If you read the version of this newsletter I wrote for the school teachers it will be much harsher because I believe students in school should experience way more discipline and they aren't likely to run away and usually have supportive families.
  - a. In this letter I am asking you not to waiver, and be clear, but you can do this with a Ghandi like personality if it looks like the client will just run away the minute you become tough. Some people are sensitive like that. Ghandi was a master of holding people accountable and letting them get away with nothing, but somehow still come across very loving and happy.

I would use one page agreements like this for every matter of discipline. Contracts control other people's behaviour just fine. You need to OFFER IT though and talk about it. The clients need to hear it, you can never be clear enough.

To learn about Tom's program and strategy for agency staff, their clients, parents and young people.

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