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.
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?
A boundary is a personal space that you keep between yourself and others. It defines “where I end and you begin.”
### 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 |
Ways Interactions are Initially Breeched by the Coach

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
What do Healthy Boundaries Look Like

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To maintain an objective relationship with parents, both parties should agree to the following:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time when it’s appropriate to talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place where it’s appropriate to talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect for each other’s role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect for each other’s time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect for each other’s money</td>
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# 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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