

# Setting Boundaries and Limits

(From The Support Team Network Guidebook 2006-2007)

It is essential that Team Members, and the Team as a whole, learn the necessity of setting boundaries and limits, and that the team always works together in making decisions about its work.

The following scenarios represent situations that Team Members may face. Read the scenarios, and consider possible responses you could make to the situation. There is no one right answer. So, consider a number of ways you could response.

Here are some important points to keep in mind as you start your work on a Support Team:

- It's OK to say No.
- Decisions about the work of the Team are to be made by the Team.
- Evaluate individual and group skills, passions, and time availability.
- It is easier to add additional types of support progressively than to exhaust all Team support quickly.
- Communicate honestly and openly with Team Members and the Care Receiver.
- Review Support Team Covenant and renew periodically.
- Revisit the Support Team Agreement with the Care as needed.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Use foresight when possible, but learn from shared experiences.

## Scenarios – Boundaries and Limits Exercise

### Scenario One

You have been with your Friend for almost a year. Several times in the past, your Friend has called Team Members insisting on an immediate response to some need. Though Team Members have usually responded, some have expressed frustration, even anger, over her demands. The Friend calls you one morning at 6:30 and says that she needs to go to the emergency room. You say that you will be glad to call an ambulance and visit her later in the day. She says she's afraid of ambulances and would prefer you take her to the hospital. You are also willing to see if you can find someone else to go with her. She says more desperately that she can't wait for all the phone calls. She says if you send an ambulance she will refuse to go. What do you do?

### Scenario Two

You have known your Friend for only a month. You meet the Friend's mother on your second visit. His mother tells you how glad she is to have you help out and has prepared a list of things for you to do each time you visit. She says, "You know I can't do everything that needs to be done and I really need you." The list includes things like changing and washing bed sheets, taking out the garbage, sorting and giving medications to her son, and going to the grocery store for him twice a week. How do you respond to her requests?

### Scenario Three

You are a part of a Team that does small home repairs for persons, mostly disabled and elderly, in the community. On several occasions, the team has done work for a man paralyzed in an automobile accident. He has talked with Team Members about his financial struggles. You are at his home repairing a leaking faucet, and he tells you he is \$40 short on his rent, due to increased cost of medications. He asks you to loan him the money, and promises to repay you when his next check arrives. What do you do? What are your options?

### Scenario Four

Your Team was organized as an AIDS Support Team and is presently serving a person living with the disease. She has not wanted others to know she is HIV+, believing they would shun her. A few days after you take her to the grocery store, a member of the church says he saw the two of you there, and he asks about her? What do you say? He presses harder and says, "Is she your AIDS person?" How do you respond?

### Scenario Five

The Team has been related to your Friend for a few months. She has responded well to two or three members of the Team and regularly calls on them for help. When other members of the team offer help, she puts them off, saying she doesn't need anything at the moment. Some members of the Team are getting discouraged. How does the Team address this concern?

### Scenario Six

Your Team is related to twelve persons living on one wing of a nursing home. Your plan of caring involves a visit to each person twice a month. There is a particular focus on reading to these Friends. In addition, something special is done on each person's birthday. Those living in other sections of the home have learned of your caring and have inquired about being included. A staff member of the home asks you about the possibility of extending your work beyond the twelve persons you've been serving. What is your response?

## **“Main Points” of Setting Boundaries and Limits Scenarios**

### **Scenario One: *Main Points***

- It's OK to say No.
- The Team needs to discuss the Team's response to emergencies, whether there are specific Team Members who are able/willing to respond to emergencies, with resulting decisions clearly communicated to the Friend.

### **Scenario Two: *Main Points***

- No member of the Team is to make decisions for the Team. (In this case, the proper response is, "I'll be glad to take your requests to the Team; then, the Team Leader will call you.")
- The importance of the *Team Agreement* (true with all these scenarios), and the need for clear decisions about what the Team is able to do and not able to do (sorting and giving medications, for example).
- Explore the relationship of the Team to other caregivers.

### **Scenario Three: *Main Points***

- The Team needs to have a clear policy that members of the Team are not to give or loan money to the Friend.
- The Team may decide what role it will have in directing the Friend to resources within the community that may be able to help financially.

### **Scenario Four: *Main Points***

- The Team is committed to confidentiality regarding all matters related to the Friend.
- Participants may suggest a variety of responses to the church member, all of which are to hold to the principle of confidentiality.

### **Scenario Five: *Main Points***

- The Team openly discusses such matters at Team meetings.
- The Team decides the best way to communicate to the Friend the nature of the Team's work, which involves all members of the Team being involved in caring.

### **Scenario Six: *Main Points***

- As in scenario two, no member of the Team makes a decision for the Team.
- The Team decides any changes in the *Team Agreement*.
- If unable to expand its work, the Team may suggest the building of a new Team.