

The following anonymously written signs of unhealthy boundaries have circulated among groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Ala-Teen, etc., for many years and have been modified, in part, for relevance to Extension professionals.

Signs that an at-risk client has unhealthy boundaries:

- Tells all
- Talks at an intimate level at first meeting
- Falls in love with an acquaintance
- Takes as much as possible regardless of need
- Gives as much as he/she can give for the sake of giving
- Believes others should anticipate his/her and fulfill their needs
- Falls apart so someone will take care of them
- Self-abuse
- Goes against personal values or rights to please others
- Allows people to take advantage of him/her
- Food and chemical abuse
- Sexual and physical abuse

Signs that staff working with at-risk clients have unhealthy boundaries:

- Giving your home phone number to clients and/or telling them to call anytime
- Giving intimate information about yourself to clients
- Believing that only you can "save" this person(s)
- Believing that the "system" doesn't understand, but only *you* do, therefore you *must* intervene.
- Believing that colleagues don't understand when you discuss/defend your behavior with clients
- Lending clients money
- Physical abuse
- Taking sides in an argument between clients
- Considering yourself "part of the family" with clients
- Experiencing stress induced illnesses such as asthma, angina, back pain, migraines, etc., when involved in interactions with clients