

## **Boundaries**

- Signal a change in the relationship
- Help us to protect our well-being and keep us safe and healthy
- Help us not only discover what hurts and what we do not like, but also what we like, what feels good, what we want/need and what brings us joy (changes the quality of our life)
- They are meant to protect us and not to punish our loved one, to take care of ourselves and not control others
- Addiction hates boundaries and feeds on open-ended, flexible and negotiable situations

## **Qualities of a Strong Boundary**

- 1) It is sustainable. Are you willing to maintain the boundary even when it feels painful and there is pushback?
- 2) It is clear, simple, unmistakable and non-negotiable.
- 3) It is about you and not about your loved one. It is based on your experience, rather than an arguable or negotiable evaluation of your loved one's condition.
- 4) It lightens your load. It should give you a feeling of relief even if it is difficult to maintain.
- 5) It helps you in tough moments. It can help stop you from reflexively saying yes when the impulse to do so can be overpowering, especially when there is an urgent request.
- 6) It is in effect now and not at some point down the road. It is not a threat or a promise, rather a report of your present reality.

- 7) You can change it later if you want or need to. Boundaries do not have to be permanent to be effective. You can adjust or remove it when it no longer meets your needs.

## **Boundary Building**

- Boundaries are most effective when they are clearly tied to priorities and goals
- Begin by writing down a few important goals and priorities in relation to your loved ones addiction.
  - 1) It is important to me that I focus on my own mental health and well being by not solving all of my husband's problems and allow him to have consequences instead.
  - 2) It is important to me that I keep my kids safe.
  - 3) It is important to me that I do not support my daughter/son's use.
- Next, create a boundary that is tied to each goal/priority.
  - 1) I will no longer cover for him with his boss and/or co-workers or make excuses for him when he shows up late for work or does not show up at all.
  - 2) If I believe my wife has been drinking, she will not be allowed inside our home and will need to find somewhere else to stay.
  - 3) I am happy to pay for groceries, gas and any other recovery related activities, but I will not give you money. Or I am happy to give you rides to school, work and treatment but you will not be able to borrow the car.

## **Boundary Upkeep and Adjusting Boundaries**

- Revisit boundaries often, they require maintenance
- Changing a boundary, does not equal weakness as long as the person you are changing it for is you and for healthy reasons
- Emotional discomfort can cause us to change or remove boundaries prematurely

### **Steps to take when deciding to modify or remove a boundary:**

- 1) Write down your current boundary
- 2) What has prompted you to change it?
- 3) What are the risks of changing or removing your boundary?
- 4) What are the rewards?
- 5) If the risks outweigh the rewards, or even give you pause, consider keeping the current boundary in place as is. If a change does seem reasonable, move on to the next step.
- 6) Be the addiction. Put yourself in shoes of the addiction. Would the addiction be happy with this change?