Creating your own professional happiness with healthy boundaries

Our last issue of Access discussed the importance of setting personal boundaries.

How are you doing with ...

• Using “I” statements?
• Avoiding those blaming “you” statements?
• Being responsible for yourself?

Let’s next explore setting healthy boundaries at work. Every company, workplace and relationship has its own “circle of responsibility.” As a matter of fact, each one of us as an employee has our own circle of responsibility. The professional boundaries that lie within our “employee circle” help us to understand our specific functions regarding control. These typically include the following:

1. **Responsibilities:** job duties and performance standards
2. **Authority:** the right and power in our job role to carry out work duties
3. **Protection:** our guard against negative consequences

An important question we confront on a daily basis is: *What should I control and what should I not control?* Many times when conflict and/or communication problems occur in the workplace, it’s due to stepping outside of one’s circle of responsibility. We then have no responsibility, no authority and no protection outside what has been given to us. We are then vulnerable to negative consequences.
Here are tips for setting healthy boundaries in the workplace:

1. **Be clear and specific in your communication.**
   Be direct with setting boundaries and stating your needs. Analyze your own nonverbal communication. How is your eye contact? Is your body language consistent with your verbal message?

2. **Be honest about your feelings.**
   Learn to own and respect your emotions. To leave a problem un-discussed is similar to leaving an infection untreated. Frustration and anger are easier to heal before they become resentment.

3. **Recognize what is and is not in your power to change.**
   Cultivate the wisdom to know what you can and cannot do to improve your life and relationships. Then, follow through with what is possible and let go of the impossible.

4. **Develop a support system.**
   We all need other people for support, reality checks, laughter and companionship.

5. **Don’t engage in unfair communication techniques.**
   Stay focused on the issue at hand, use “I” statements, and avoid name-calling or the silent treatment. Seek professional support or guidance to learn more effective or assertive communication.

6. **Learn to listen. This takes practice!**
   Know that listening must be active to be effective. This involves taking a defenseless interest in another’s feelings, thoughts and opinions, before formulating your own response.

   Good boundaries are set, in part, through clear communication. If you would like more assistance with setting boundaries or improving communication, please call the Aurora EAP at 800-236-3231.

---

The information presented in this newsletter is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your own physician. Contact your physician if you believe you have a health problem.