

Canadian Anglican Cursillo

RESPECTING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES



*“Show proper respect to everyone, love the fellowship of believers...”
(1 Peter 2:17)*

Boundary: *A border line between persons, places or things.*

Personal Boundaries: *the degree of distance or space considered safe or appropriate to maintain personal integrity (is established and maintained between persons during interactions and is dependent on degree of trust established and nature and setting of interaction).*

Boundary Crossing: *Actions or behaviors that deviate from established or expected boundaries in an interaction or relationship.*

Boundary Violation: *Boundary crossing actions or behaviors which extend beyond an accidental boundary crossing and use a trust relationship with another to meet personal needs and may result in harm to the other.*

Boundary Signs: *Actions, behaviors or thoughts which present warning signals that personal boundaries, in a particular interaction or relationship, are in jeopardy or may have been crossed.*

Cursillo is intended to help Christians learn and live what is fundamental as a Christian, and to help these same Christians to discover and live out a personal vocation. Just as Jesus came to earth to dwell among humans: *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14), the Cursillo movement enables us to serve God by befriending others to bring them to Christ.

Personal contact or the individual friendships we have with others as Christians is crucial to the working of the Holy Spirit through the Cursillo movement. We remember the motto from the Weekend: *“Make a friend, be a friend, bring that friend to Christ”*. Exemplary interpersonal communication skills are crucial to these relationships.

Cursillistas can sometimes be enthusiastic about their faith and about their experience within Cursillo, which may have contributed to a re-awakening of personal commitment to both Christ and the church. It is possible for this enthusiasm to bubble over and lead to actions, comments or attitudes that may threaten others and/or may be perceived as boundary crossings or violations.

How do we, as loving and caring members of the Cursillo community, share the joy of Christ with others and show proper respect to others, especially in the area of personal contact?

Respecting Personal Boundaries

Ideas

The following are some areas to consider:

1. **Physical boundaries and personal space** – This includes touching or hugging others. Situations may include: praying for another, comforting another who may be crying or reacting emotionally, responding to music by raising your arms or dancing. For some this degree of intimacy or exuberance may be unacceptable and may create an environment that feels unsafe or uncomfortable for them.

The use of perfume or scents can also be a physical boundary for those who are sensitive or allergic to particular odours.

Permission - Before touching, always seek permission from the other. If they say “No”, then DO NOT IGNORE THE STATED WISH! Accept their refusal with grace. Do not make them feel that somehow their refusal is inappropriate.

2. **Sensitivity to religious or cultural beliefs, values and/or expressions** – People are amazingly diverse and so are their ways to worship God. Respect the individual’s personal religious devotion and liturgical practice. A respectful environment allows each person to engage with God in their own personal way.
3. **Relationship Building** – Relationship building takes time. There are several appropriate stages: contact, involvement and intimacy. The National Episcopal Cursillo booklet: *Personal Contact Technique* describes these stages as follows:
 - **Contact** – begun by perceiving that there is someone with whom you would like to establish a relationship, and then interacting to explore if common interests can be developed.
 - **Involvement** - discovery if the relationship is mutually beneficial – involves learning more about each other and learning where our friend is in her/his life in Christ. Through natural conversation. **THERE IS RISK OF BOUNDARY CROSSING AND VIOLATION IF THIS STAGE MOVES TOO QUICKLY.**
 - **Intimacy** - This stage involves some degree of commitment to the relationship; more depth takes place in sharing details of our lives, faith, fears, pain.

Self-disclosure, revealing information about yourself too early in a relationship, can result in boundary crossing or violation. When someone opens up to us, we are likely to respond by opening up to them. Deep self-disclosure is best saved for those with whom you have a deep and trusted relationship. Consider your motivation to self disclose. Consider whether or not the self disclosure is appropriate to the conversation. Consider the depth of disclosure of the other person. This will advise you of his/her comfort level with the degree of sharing.

How we respect the boundaries of others may affect how that person views the Church, and thus, what and how we act and speak have great implications. We must build genuine friendships and demonstrate sincere caring and respect for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Listen actively, objectively and respectfully. Pray that your relationships with others will be respectful.

References

NEC Personal Contact Technique