

Director of Clinical Programs

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Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Clinical boundaries are often the subject of blame, scorn, fear, and misalignment with our clients. Therapists, psychiatrists, case managers, and other providers are known to blame their clients for their poor boundaries. “Ugh, I have that borderline coming today,” is said in fear as the person readies themselves for an emotional assault they just know is coming. Most people enter behavioral health professions in order to “help people,” yet they miss the moments when they can help people the most. Is this understandable? Sure, many behavioral health providers would state they are overwhelmed by the amount of suffering they see in a day, and this wears down their compassion and ability to remain positive when they are brought directly into the “emotional space” of therapy as their clients push on the clinical boundaries. Is there a way to handle your client’s boundary issues to maintain proper boundaries, reduce feelings of burn-out, create a deeper and better understanding of your client’s suffering and coping strategies, and reduce their suffering and relational distress?

AIM

Reduce negative judgments associated with clients’ clinical boundaries, reduce provider burn-out, increase clinical understanding of the client and their suffering, and increase client relational success.

CONCLUSION

Simply put, dealing with clinical boundary issues doesn’t have to be so hard. Once you let your clients become the target of your scorn and negative judgment, you are knocked out of your place as a compassionate healer and burn-out becomes more likely. Understanding your own boundary triggers, knowing what to do and say when your client pushes on your boundaries, and developing a clinical lens to view their boundary issues through are keys for all behavioral health providers.

KEYWORDS

clinical psychology, boundaries, relationships, burn-out, self-care.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Christopher J. Celio is a Director of Clinical Programs at Portia Bell Hume Behavioral Health and Training Center in California. Dr. Celio, who started working in the mental health field in 2001 and originally trained to be a Child Psychologist, found his calling when he joined The Hume Center as a Pre-Doctoral Intern in 2007. While this shifted his focus to serving adults diagnosed with serious mental illness, he brought with him an emphasis on the family and other systems that the consumer is a part of and a creative spirit that believes that healing and recovery can come through many surprising and outside-of-the-box pathways, beliefs, and persons.

Dr. Celio implemented Hume Center’s first Full Service Partnership Program serving adults diagnosed with severe mental illness and supported the implementation of Hume’s Rapid Resolution program that has been able to prevent homelessness in 73% of appropriate households referred. He also directly implemented an early intervention mental health program at a local afterschool program for high-risk youth.

Dr. Celio is constantly providing trainings for providers, families, and consumers in the community, including trainings on Communication Skills, Clinical Boundaries, Personal Boundaries, Self-Care/Burnout Prevention for Providers, Self-Care for Family Members, Making Friends and Getting Ready for Romance, Clinical Strategies and Ethical Guidelines for Telehealth, and Ways to Cope with Strong Feelings due to During COVID-19. Dr. Celio is also micro-certified in Telebehavioral Health and is a certified instructor in CPI’s Verbal Non-Violent Crisis Prevention.

He is a co-founder of the local annual Hope Cup Softball Tournament and Annual Bowling Tournament, where consumers, family members, and providers involved at over eight agencies compete together to restore hope, reduce stigma, and show that we’re all in this together. He was proud to be awarded the Hope Award by the Peer Provider Classes of 2017 and 2018, the Community Partnership Award by the Putnam Clubhouse in 2018, and the Committed Clinician Award by NAMI Contra Costa in 2019. He was honored to be chosen by Contra Costa Behavioral Health to moderate their first local “Bust Stigma” event for Recovery Month 2019 and by Putnam Clubhouse to moderate their Reimagine Mental Health Care Conference in 2020.