

# Chapter 13

## Empowering Educators and Students Through Boundaries

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Setting and maintaining boundaries is critical to any healthy relationship; this is no less true of the relationship between faculty and students. Education aims to empower students by facilitating their development of independent decision-making, critical thinking, problem-solving, time management skills, accountability, and self-efficacy. This can be done by setting boundaries that balance being accessible to students and providing the space for them to learn, explore, and develop independence. Boundaries also empower faculty by helping to reduce stress, avoid burnout, and promote an appropriate work-life balance. The authors explore research on setting boundaries to promote student success, empower faculty, and promote a healthy learning environment. Recommendations are shared on how to set and maintain boundaries between faculty and students regarding classroom expectations, activities, communications, and grading.*

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-4407-1.ch013

## **EMPOWERING EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS THROUGH BOUNDARIES**

There is a saying that good fences make good neighbors. By the same token, boundaries can make for good students and good educators. The idea of setting boundaries in our personal and professional lives is not new. Numerous sources from a wide variety of disciplines focus on the importance of setting and maintaining healthy boundaries (University of Massachusetts, 2023). Healthy boundaries are linked to self-care, mental health, and appropriate relationships – both personally and professionally (Tawwab, 2021). It is important to set boundaries and make expectations clear. The value of this is twofold; it helps to establish what behavior we will accept from others, and it helps to establish what behavior others can expect from us (Pattemore, 2021; Tawwab, 2021). In this chapter, we delve into the research concerning establishing boundaries to foster student success, empower faculty members, and cultivate an atmosphere conducive to learning. We will offer insights and suggestions on effectively establishing and upholding boundaries between faculty and students regarding classroom dynamics, activities, communication protocols, and grading procedures.

Throughout this chapter, we will share personal experiences and stories of interactions between ourselves (or our colleagues) and students within the online classroom environment. The purpose of this is not to be negative or to disparage anyone but to serve as cautionary tales to illustrate to the audience that many educators experience the same things and to demonstrate how setting boundaries can be a positive development for you and your students. We hope these examples will be useful to our readers in terms of identifying and setting appropriate boundaries for themselves (as educators) and their students.

The concept of establishing boundaries, both in our personal and professional lives, has been well-documented across diverse fields (Allen et al., 2021; Kariou et al., 2021; Pattemore, 2021). From self-help literature to academic studies, the emphasis on maintaining healthy boundaries remains consistent. These boundaries are crucial for promoting self-care, preserving mental well-being, avoiding burnout, and fostering positive interpersonal relationships (Kariou et al., 2021; Tawwab, 2021). Clearly defining and upholding boundaries serves a dual purpose: it delineates the standards of behavior we deem acceptable from others while also setting clear expectations for our students. Researchers have recognized that the ability to appropriately set and maintain boundaries, and therefore achieve an appropriate work-life balance, is a desirable but elusive objective (Allen et al., 2021). Particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, research on effectively managing boundaries for remote workers continues to be important (Allen et al., 2021). There is a growing body of literature on boundaries in various occupations,

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