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Professional Boundaries Statement

This professional boundaries statement is adapted with permission from Dominic Davies (PinkShrink on here) of Pink Therapy. [<https://fetlife.com/users/1502762>]

Boundaries

The easiest way to think about boundary issues is to compare the situation to practising therapy in a small town rather than a large city. A city provides much more anonymity, making strict separation between professional and personal/community life more possible. In a small town, a therapist is likely to know people both before and after they are clients. During the course of therapy, the client and therapist are likely to run into each other at the local shops, the post office, at local events, or wherever.

Confidentiality

This is likely to be the major concern for potential clients. It is also a central element in professional codes of ethical behaviour, as well as part of the statutory requirements. It is a value I personally feel strongly about.

- I adhere to all of the usual safeguards for confidentiality and secure record keeping.
- I always explain to my clients about their right to confidentiality, as well as identifying the few exceptions that may be mandated by law. What is said in therapy, or other professional interactions, will not be shared with anyone else, without a signed release of information, or in the very rare instances mandated by law and/or court order. The exception to this is in supervision, where I discuss my practice with another therapist in a similarly confidential environment. Regular supervision comes under the ethics of my membership organisation and helps me give a better service to my clients.
- It goes without saying that I will not out anyone's sexual interests or activities.
- If we meet in public, I will take my cue from how you acknowledge me, and/or what we have talked about and agreed upon. We can discuss in a session how we are going to acknowledge each other, if at all. It isn't rude to decide to not acknowledge each other. It's about what makes you, the client, feel more comfortable. There are all kinds of ways that we might have become casually acquainted, other than our actual professional relationship. However, if you identify me to others as your therapist, it will be hard for me to deny it. Of course, I still will not talk about what we are working on.

Friends and Acquaintances

Certain kinds/levels of dual relationship are strongly discouraged. Generally this refers to romantic relationships and sexual activity. It could also extend to some business relationships. It also includes family members, or significant others of existing friends or clients.

- If we already know each other well, and if either of us considers the other a good friend, I will not take you on as a paying client.
- If we are acquaintances, including online friends, but do not know each other well, it may be appropriate to work together as therapist and client. We will discuss the implications of any prior interaction and knowledge of each other, as well as how it may limit our friendship in the future.
- In between good friends and casual acquaintances, there is quite a bit of a grey area. We would take even more time to discuss prior interaction, and how the transition to a defined professional relationship may or may not work. This is the kind of situation that small town practitioners likely have to deal with.

- If we talk and then decide we cannot work together for various reasons described here, I will try to recommend other practitioners/listings to you.

Public Play

- If you become a client, we will agree to share with each other any plans to attend specific community events. If we have previously encountered/witnessed each other at such events, previous to deciding to work together, we would discuss the implications of it and what it might mean for our working relationship.

If you are in need of counselling...

..and you would consider doing that work with me, I hope you will raise any questions and concerns you may have, whether I've covered them here or not. I want to be able to help you in a safe and comfortable way. Once that kind of trust is established, we can work together, so that you can reach your full potential, according to your own definitions and goals.

It will often be the case that clients come to me for issues and problems that are not all that sexually, kink, poly or queer related. But they don't want to have to hide that part of their life, and they don't want to spend a lot of time educating their therapists on the basics of these topics. You still get to explain what it all means to you, as a unique individual, which will take time and effort enough

