

# Boundary Crossings and Dual Relationships in Psychotherapy

*Ofer Zur, Ph.D.*



## *I. Boundary Crossings and Boundary Violations In Therapy*

- ◆ Boundaries
- ◆ Boundary crossings and boundary violations
- ◆ Boundary violations in therapy are different from boundary crossings
- ◆ Harmful boundary violations
- ◆ Boundary crossings
- ◆ Ethics codes
- ◆ Therapeutic orientations,
- ◆
- ◆ boundary crossings are unavoidable and expected
- ◆ Different cultures
- ◆ Not all boundary crossings constitute dual relationships.
- ◆ unfounded belief about the 'slippery slope'
- ◆ 'sexualizing boundaries.'
- ◆ borderline personality disorders,
- ◆ according to the client's unique needs

## ***II. Dual Relationships in Psychotherapy***

### **DEFINITION:**

Dual relationships, or multiple relationships, in psychotherapy refer to any situation where multiple roles exist between a therapist and a client. Examples are when the client is *also* a student, friend, family member, employee or business associate of the therapist.

- ◆ Non-sexual dual relationships are not unethical or illegal.
- ◆ Dual relationships are often unavoidable
- ◆ Non-sexual dual relationships do not necessarily lead to exploitation, sex or harm
- ◆ Almost all ethical guidelines do not mandate a blanket avoidance of dual relationships.
- ◆ Exploitative therapists will take advantage with or without restrictions
- ◆ There are several types of dual relationships:
  - 1) A social dual relationship is
  - 2) A sexual dual relationship is
  - 3) A professional dual relationship
  - 4) A business dual relationship is
  - 5) Communal dual relationship
  - 6) Institutional dual relationships
- ◆ Dual relationships can be avoidable, unavoidable or mandated: Voluntary-Avoidable:
  - Unavoidable:
  - Mandated:
- ◆ Dual relationships can be concurrent or sequential: A concurrent dual relationship  
A sequential dual relationship
- ◆ There are several levels of involvement of dual relationships: Incidental Encounter:
  - Overlapping:
  - Multiple:
- ◆ isolation
- ◆ therapeutic approaches
- ◆ fear

### *III. Clinical Recommendations*

context

◇ Client factors:

◇ Setting factors:

◇ Therapy factors:

◇ Therapist factors:  
treatment plan

◆ Do not let fear of lawsuits, licensing boards or attorneys

to provide help, not to practice risk management.

Remember that you are being paid

◆ Do not enter into sexual relations  
treatment planning

◆ Consult

consult

◆ clinical, ethical and legal

◆ be aware of your own needs

◆ Remember you are paid to do a job, not to protect yourself or practice risk management.

◆ Discuss

◆ office policies

◆ ethical guidelines

◆ questions

◆ records

◆ treatment plans

◆ Model civility, integrity, emotionality, humanity, courage and, when appropriate, duality.

# Online Free Resources & Online Courses on Boundaries and Dual Relationships in Psychotherapy Available from:

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- ◆ Bartering
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- ◆ Dual Relationships
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- ◆ Out-Of-Office Experiences - Home or hospital visits, adventure therapy, anorexic lunch, attending a wedding, etc.
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- ◆ Codes of Ethics on Boundaries, Dual Relationships, Bartering, Touch, Gifts, Etc.
- ◆ Touch in Therapy
- ◆ *Links to other online resources*
- ◆ *Links to all Codes of Ethics of major professional associations*



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*).* *Dual Relationships & Psychotherapy*

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