

Talk to Yourself First...

Setting and maintaining key boundaries in publishing relationships.

- 1. If you want to be the successful author everyone wants to work with, you have to understand how YOU work best with others.**
- 2. You can only control what you say, while you react to what you hear others saying and doing.**

How well do you know and set your relationship boundaries?

Work to understand your own communication needs, so you can adapt to others' expectations?

Can you stay professional while you work through issues with someone who has a different communication style than you?

Talk to yourself first...A little skit at Anna's expense... Just how hard is it to let someone else constructively know when they've pushed you beyond your limits?

3. Boundaries protect and define your rights as well as others.

Boundaries keep you from feeling controlled, threatened or ignored in professional relationships.

Boundaries tell you what you in a profession relationship to maintain your comfort level.

- **External boundaries** help you take responsibility for your physical self.
- **Internal boundaries** help you take responsibility for your own feelings, thoughts, beliefs, choices, experiences and actions.

Not setting and understanding clear personal boundaries can result in not being able to take personal responsibility for your own decisions, actions and professional relationship problems.

- Boundaries help you accept what you are and are not responsible for.
- They protect both your needs and those of the person you're communicating with.

Talk to yourself first...More fun, a-la goofing around with Anna's mind... You'd be surprised just how easy it is to pick out boundary issues in any crowd of friends or coworkers?

Boundaries help you accept what you are and are not responsible for.

Understanding and communicating your boundaries allows you to be as close to others as you want, without feeling uncomfortable or overwhelmed with others' needs.

Understanding and accepting others boundaries allows others to determine how close you can get to them. Respecting others' rights to differences of opinion, management style and point of view means you don't try to manipulate, control or bully others to do things your way.

Boundaries help you take responsibility for your choices and allows you to accept when others choose differently, even if it means not getting what you want, the way you expected things to happen.

Key personal boundaries in communication

- **Feelings** affect how you express yourself to others.
- **Attitudes about others** affect what you allow yourself to believe about others and how you respond to what they do or say.
- **Behaviors**--YOU control how you act and react, regardless of the issue at hand..
- **Choices**--Even when you allow someone else to make decisions for you, you're making a choice to give up that control. .
- **Values** affect what you consider most important and how you react when those important things are at stake
- **Limits** include the responsibility to make sure others know what you need to feel comfortable and okay, as well as making sure you don't take advantage of them.
- **Talents**- are what you recognize and develop in yourself, rather than waiting for others to notice and make you into what we want to be.
- **Thoughts**--Your thoughts are your own. Other people don't make you think in certain ways--thoughts are choices, and therefore your own responsibility. Likewise, you cannot control what other people think.

Basically, *what they think about you is none of your business.*

While we may be able to influence others, we cannot control what they think, say or do, no matter how hard we try. **Getting emotionally upset over another's choice to the point that your doing damage to your professional relationships typically means you've crossed over one or more key boundaries. You cannot control another person's behavior or point of view.**

Talk to yourself first...*Okay, lets get specific... Anyone here ever seen or heard this happy in a RWA or local chapter environment?*

When boundaries aren't set and maintained...

Understanding and communicating your boundaries allows you to be as close to others as you want, without feeling uncomfortable with or overwhelmed by their needs.

Not setting clear personal boundaries, and not accepting others' limits and expectations, can result in a communication breakdown that could stall your career, no matter how talented a writer you are.

Escalating communication problems when clear boundaries aren't set

- **Words** are used to hurt or insult or damage chances to talk further, because a boundary you're not aware of and haven't communicated is being threatened.
- **Nonverbal cues** may tell others to stay away, meanwhile you don't understand why they don't want to work with you..
- **Emotional distance** can be used to protect boundaries you aren't aware of, stopping you from engaging in the business/relationships you want to excel at.
- **Your actions or communication style** may be perceived as abusive or rigid, when instead you're simply protecting yourself from the possibility of being rejected--a self-fulfilling, destructive behavioral pattern.
- **Physical distance** may feel safer than engaging in the business or professional relationships you want, out of fear of boundaries you cannot verbalize being crossed--fear of being hurt.
- **You rob others** of the chance to know you and the opportunity to learn from you, when you cannot be honest about who you are and what you need.

For some, confronting what you need from your career is a hard first step. Verbalizing those needs to other professionals can make you feel particularly vulnerable, especially if you've had difficulty with this in your personal life.

But in business, it's never, ever personal. You're expressing business concerns and dealing with others on a professional level. Controlling your expectations and setting boundaries that eliminate your feelings from the professional equation as often as possible are the keys to communication success.

Talk to yourself first...*So, you're probably asking, how do you keep business from feeling personal. Let's give it a shot--this time, Michelle's in the hot seat!*

Become aware of boundary issues—yours and others

The ins and outs of asserting your boundaries, once you know what they are, is a topic for another workshop. But once you become aware of the importance of boundaries, you can begin to see their effects (or the effect of their absence) on the professional and interpersonal relationships around you.

Those who cannot maintain their own boundaries tend to have difficulty:

- **making decisions on their own**, saying no to people, asking for what they need, being happy unless others are, avoiding hurtful relationships,
- **trusting others**, not feeling inappropriately ashamed, anxious or afraid, understanding what they're feeling, disconnecting their moods from others, meeting their needs (meanwhile they're taking care of others)
- **controlling anger**, handling criticism, not taking responsibility for other people's problems

Those who cannot respect others boundaries tend to:

- **make decisions for others**, interrupt others, invade the personal space of others, have difficulty hearing "no", have difficulty focusing on others' needs, believe their happiness depends on others' actions
- **expect others to trust them** without earning or deserving that trust, disparage others' ideas and opinions when they do not agree, feel superior to others, criticize others
- **feel angry all the time**, project their faults onto others, feel no responsibility for others' feelings, or their impact on other's feelings, believe they are owed what they want (entitled to it, without having to work harder than they want to for it)

Once you begin to see these types of behavior patterns in your working relationships, you start to see the personalities (yours and others) behind the drama that can be a big part of our industry.

You can learn to avoid that drama in your own career, by working on your boundaries, communicating them, and not being pulled into no-win, toxic confrontations with others, until YOU're ready to handle them positively.

Always take the time you need to be able to respect your values and limits, and to keep your communication professional and positive.

Talk to yourself first...And when you do see one (or say a dozen) of these boundary issues barreling at you with no way out...what then??? Michelle's really going to like this role play ;o)

Remember

The key is to:

- Set and test relationship boundaries before a crisis happens. Listen carefully to yourself and others, and modify your communication choices to maintain healthy boundaries (yours and theirs).
- Know what you can and cannot control in a conversation or professional confrontation.
- Focus on achieving a positive result, rather than winning or proving you're right. You cannot control what the other person thinks about you or your ideas.
- DO NOT have an emotional stake in business communications. Not achieving your goal simply means rethinking your plan and trying again--not that you've failed, or that the other person doesn't like or respect you, or that you need to retaliate (through gossip or negative words or actions) because you've been rejected personally.

5. Questions...

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Anna DeStefano is a best selling author of long contemporary romance for Harlequin Superromance. She's a Romantic Times Reviewers Choice Award winner, winner of the Gayle Wilson Award of Excellence, and she's president of Georgia Romance Writers. She's published nine award-winning novels since 2004, and nearly half a million copies of her books are in print in over six different languages. Her interactive workshops on the writing process--plotting through character, drafting, and rewriting--regularly attract standing room-only crowds. Her series of communication workshops are the latest addition to her teaching resume, and they're quickly becoming the most requested of her programs. For more information, see www.annawrites.com or www.annadestefano.blogspot.com.

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From the moment Michelle Grajkowski first opened her doors to the 3 Seas Literary Agency in August of 2000, she has been living her dream. (What could be better than surrounding yourself with great authors and their exciting and imaginative books?).

Since then, she's successfully sold into major publishing houses including Harlequin, NAL, Berkley, Dorchester, Kensington, Avon, Pocket, Random House (both here and in the UK), Knopf, Andrews McMeel, Warner, St. Martin's and HarperCollins. To query Michelle, see her submission guidelines at www.threeseaslit.com.