

Often as massage therapists we are unaware of whether we are overstepping our boundaries with our clients. Sometimes we may feel uneasy about our relationship with a particular client, yet we cannot put our finger on why we feel the way we do.

bodyworkers who want to find out if they have boundary issues with one or more of their clients. If you check off any of these items, boundary issues may be interfering with your ability to work effectively. It is a good idea to seek professional supervision if you notice any of these behaviors continuing, even after you have attempted to change them.

This checklist is for massage therapists and

Are You In Trouble With A Client?

*Estelle Disch, Ph.D.**

Client's initials or
pseudonym _____

1. ___ This client feels more like a friend than a client.
2. ___ I often tell my personal problems to this client.
3. ___ I feel sexually aroused in response to this client.
4. ___ I want to be friends with this client when therapy ends.
5. ___ I'm waiting for therapy to end in order to become romantically involved with this client.
6. ___ To be honest, I think the goodbye hugs last too long with this client.
7. ___ Sessions often run overtime with this client.
8. ___ I tend to accept gifts or favors from this client without examining why the gift was given.
9. ___ I have a barter arrangement with this client that is sometimes a source of tension for me.

10. ___ I have had sexual contact with this client.
11. ___ I sometimes choose my clothing with this particular client in mind.
12. ___ I have attended small professional or social events at which I knew this client would be present, without discussing it ahead of time.
13. ___ This client often invites me to social events and I don't feel comfortable saying either yes or no.
14. ___ I have physical contact with this client after s/he gets off the table in my office.
15. ___ Sometimes when I'm touching this client during our regular body work sessions, I feel like the contact is sexualized for one or the other or both of us.
16. ___ There's something I like about being alone in the office with this client when no one else is around.
17. ___ I am tempted to lock the door when working with this client.
18. ___ This client is very seductive and I often don't know how to handle it.

19. ___ This client owes me a lot of money and I don't know what to do about it.
20. ___ I have invited this client to public or social events.
21. ___ I am often late for sessions with this particular client.
22. ___ I find myself cajoling, teasing, joking a lot with this client.
23. ___ I am in a heavy emotional crisis myself and I identify so much with this client's pain that I can hardly attend to the client.
24. ___ I allow this client to comfort me.
25. ___ I feel like this client and I are very much alike.
26. ___ This client scares me.
27. ___ This client's pain is so deep I can hardly stand it.
28. ___ I enjoy feeling more powerful than this client.
29. ___ Sometimes I feel like I'm in over my head with this client.
30. ___ I often feel hooked or lost with this client and advice from colleagues and former teachers hasn't helped.
31. ___ I often feel invaded or pushed by this client and have a difficult time standing my ground.
32. ___ I sometimes hate this client.
33. ___ I sometimes feel like punishing or controlling this client.
34. ___ I feel overly protective of this client.
35. ___ I sometimes have a drink or use some recreational drugs with this client.
36. ___ I'm doing so much on this client's behalf I feel exhausted.
37. ___ I accommodate to this client's schedule and then feel angry/manipulated.
38. ___ This client's fee feels too high or too low to me.

39. ___ This client has invested money in an enterprise of mine or vice versa.
40. ___ I have hired this client to work for me.
41. ___ This client has hired me to work for her/him.
42. ___ I find it very difficult to keep from talking about this client with people close to me.
43. ___ I find myself saying a lot about myself with this client- telling stories, engaging in peer-like conversation.
44. ___ If I were to list people in my clientele with whom I could envision myself in a sexual relationship, this client would be on the list.
45. ___ I call this client a lot and go out of my way to meet with her/him in locations convenient to her/him.
46. ___ This client has spent time at my home (apart from the office).

If you answered yes to any of these questions it would be a good idea to seek professional supervision. It is my belief that all bodyworkers and massage therapists would do better in their work if they utilized a supervisor on a regular basis.



** This article was adapted and reorganized from a questionnaire developed by Estelle Disch.*

Estelle Disch has practiced for over 20 years as a clinical sociologist and psychotherapist, she teaches sociology at U.Mass/Boston, and has conducted workshops, trainings and supervision groups for many years. Estelle co-directs BASTA! - Boston Associates to Stop Therapy Abuse, where she has worked with survivors of sexual abuse by helping professionals for almost eight years.



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