

# Boundaries As A Mental Health First Aider (MHFA)

"It's really important that when we throw the lifeline to someone, we don't get in the water with them."

Setting boundaries can often be the most **challenging** part of the MHFA role. Very easily we can find ourselves offering a lot of our time and energy to other people, whilst forgetting to take care of our own mental wellbeing. Knowing where to draw the line can be hard, but **here are some ideas**.

## Try to avoid this...

“ You can contact me anytime, I'll always be here to help you

“ I promise I will get you the support you need

“ I won't tell anyone what you say today so please be honest

“ Would you like me to come to your appointment with you or call your GP on your behalf?

Talking about triggering subjects for yourself

Not looking after yourself after difficult conversations and jumping straight back into work or supporting someone else

## And instead, try this...

“ If you need to speak to me again, you can email me for a 20-minute timeslot in working hours.

**Keep conversations within working hours** and be explicit in the amount of time an employee can have with you. Try not to be their only source of support and allow them to contact you at all times.

“ So we have looked at different signposting options today, take a look at them in more detail and reach out to those you think will benefit you.

**Don't over-promise** on the support you can provide. Be honest and give them autonomy over their next steps.

“ Everything we talk about is confidential unless there is any risk to your safety or the safety of others. I will have to inform the relevant people if this happens.

You have a **duty of care** to keep the employee safe and ensure they get the correct professional support they may need. **There are limits to confidentiality** and you need to **tell someone** else if there is a **risk of harm** to the individual or someone else they know.

“ It's important for you to have some responsibility over your choices. I can sit with you whilst you call your GP if that will help you feel calmer?

Keep boundaries around autonomy and **allow the individual to have a responsibility over their own recovery and next steps**. You can provide emotional and practical support to them whilst they take responsibility for the next steps.

**You do not have to talk about topics of conversation that would impact your own wellbeing**. Instead, signpost the individual to another MHFA or support service that would be better placed to support them.

Your wellbeing is very important and you can't pour from an empty cup. **Make sure you look after yourself and take some time after each conversation to decompress**. Be a role model for your colleagues and practice self-care to look after your own wellbeing as much as possible.