

Top Ten Reasons to Take Boundary Awareness Training

10. The ministry is a calling from God, but it is also a profession. Like other professions, ordained ministry requires a graduate degree (or an approved equivalency) as well as continued study. On a practical level, ministry is also a very hard job that involves constant relating to people, often at a vulnerable time in their lives. Like other difficult professions entailing great responsibility for the vulnerable (such as law or medicine), continuing education and ethical standards are essential so that the practitioner can take good care of those who benefit from the practice of the profession. Boundary Awareness Training is continuing education and provides a safe space for the discussion of ethical standards with other ministers who are “in the trenches.”

9. Does the thought of Boundary Awareness Training make you nervous or anxious? Why? WHAT ARE YOU HIDING?

8. It's hard not to get burned out when so many people place demands on you. It's not easy continually “making meaning” in a stressful world where very bad things happen to people. A CLERGY PEER GROUP CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY. Learn how to start one and find some congenial people to start one with. It's fun to meet clergy from other associations.

7. If you can't take a day and a half away from the parish to worship, fellowship with your peers and discuss clergy ethics in a changing world, then you've got a problem. If you are “too busy” or “too needed” to get away for a day and a half, then you need a week of boundary awareness training at least. YOU ARE NOT INDISPENSABLE! YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING! YOUR MINISTRY SETTING CAN DO WITHOUT YOU FOR TWO DAYS EVEN!

6. The world is changing. Dating, communication and sexual mores are radically different today than even five years ago. Everyone can benefit from discussing social change with a mix of congenial colleagues whose social situations vary (single/ married, gay/straight, etc). Let's explore ways to navigate the new boundaries of ministry together!

5. It's true: women know that boundaries keep them safe. In my experience, it is usually men that complain about boundary awareness training because they view it as limiting their “freedom.” In reality, understanding appropriate boundaries keeps all of us safe.

4. If you are retired from active ministry, or employed in secular work, but still supply preach, or teach Bible study or lead groups in your home

church, you still need boundary awareness training, because you still wear the mantle of respect and power that comes with being ordained. To some individuals, your words and actions may be taken more seriously than others', and you can unknowingly become involved in boundary issues. Please take the time to meet with your peers and talk about how to navigate being retired from ministry but not retired from ordained status. Also, you can be helpful to newer clergy who may need a mentor or a friend.

3. Insurance is an essential fact of modern life. As you may know if you have ever found yourself in a "fender-bender", liability insurance is good to have, not to mention legally required! It's the same with ministry. Our churches need insurance to prevent catastrophic loss, whether from a hurricane or pastoral misconduct. Our Insurance Board recommends boundary awareness training for all clergy and lay workers as a part of its "Safe Church for Everyone" initiative.

2. We all want to be the exception, don't we. But guess what. YOU AREN'T.

1. In our UCC system of polity, the Association sets the standards both for ordination and for the granting and maintenance of standing. All CAC Associations have chosen to require Boundary Awareness Training for clergy who desire to keep their standing active. End of story. JUST DO IT ALREADY!