Negotiating Boundaries

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Basic Peer Leadership Training
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We will explore:

• How your experiences will benefit incoming students

• How your experiences may inhibit incoming students

• Communication skills as a strategy to avoid this

• The “Do’s and Don’ts” of leadership
Boundaries are important rules and guidelines that should be set out in order to maintain a positive and healthy environment.

If you do not set strong boundaries, many of the benefits of the student-peer leader relationship are LOST!
What are some possible boundaries that should be established with students?
A word on boundaries

- Preferential treatment and consistency
- What do you do if you know someone beforehand?
A word on boundaries

- Contact information (emails, phone numbers)
- Meeting locations (e.g. office hours)
- Dating?
- Homework
- Money
A word on boundaries

Things to keep in mind

- Mention romantic relationships to your coordinator
- Power imbalances
- Importance of professionalism
- Equitable treatment
- Effective communication
- Representatives of an organization
- We are here to serve our peers!
In your groups, complete the puzzle on your table as quickly as you can.
Puzzle Lessons (Part 1):

• What was your experience completing the puzzle?

• What were the challenges? How did you overcome them?

• Why were you successful in overcoming them?
Reflection Exercise

• The successes and challenges you had as a York student

• The positive and negative experiences you had as a York student

• Someone who has had a great impact on you as a student
The Benefit of your Experience:

How might your experiences benefit an incoming student?
The Benefit of sharing your Experience:

- Navigating the system
- How and where to get help
- How to get good grades
- How to make meaningful connections
- How to talk to faculty
- How to make the most of classes
- How to get what you need from your readings
- Knowing the language and culture of university
Puzzle Lessons:

What would you say if I told you that none of the puzzles were/are complete?
The Pitfalls of sharing your Experience:

What are the drawbacks to imparting our own experience on others?
The Pitfalls of sharing your Experience:

• What worked for me may not work for others
• Academic rules change from year to year
• Can come across as patronizing
• Not about us! The focus should be the student
• We make assumptions and have biases
• We pass along our baggage and close off what might be valuable avenues for our students
A word on boundaries

➤ One short story…

The Parable of the Butterfly
A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day, a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as though it had gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further. So, the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.
The Parable of the Butterfly

What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were nature’s way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

- What is the moral of this story?
- How does this apply to the context of Peer Leadership?
What do you think are the Do’s and Don’ts of a Peer Leader?
Do Be:

• A friend
• An advisor
• Pro-student
• Sensitive to uniqueness of each student
• Ready to share your experiences
• An empowerer

Don’t Be:

• A buddy
• Condescending
• Anti-York
• Inconsistent in what you give your students
• Imposing your solutions
• A problem solver
Final Thoughts

Please write 3 things you have learned from this module!


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