



Workshop: “Yes! No. Yes?” Boundary Setting

This workshop is broken into six sections and will take approximately 2 hours to complete.

Section One: Networking (15 min)

Breakout Groups: Introductions

To the other members of your breakout group, introduce yourself. Then briefly identify a real-world, boundary-setting conversation YOU need to have. It can be either professional or personal, but it should be something you’re comfortable sharing! What are you concerned about? What walls do you think you’ll run into? What information do you feel you’re missing?

Section Two: Modeling “Yes! No. Yes?” Scenario (20-25min)

Main Group: Read the scenario, then discuss the questions below.

- A. *The day a family is exiting the shelter, a shelter advocate observes a parent angrily berating and degrading a child and suspects emotional abuse. After the parent and child leave the shelter, the advocate wants to submit a DCFS report. That being said, they know VAWA confidentiality doesn’t permit them to share any of the parent’s PII (Personally Identifying Information) outside of what is statutorily required.*

*Using the values of **safety** and **confidentiality**, the advocate crafts a “Yes! No. Yes?” response for themselves:*

- **Yes!:** “I value the emotional safety of this child, and I also value the parent’s right to confidentiality and safety. I know that if I share PII, the information may get leaked to their abuser and endanger them further.”
- **No:** “I will not be a bystander to child abuse, and I will also not share PII.”
- **Yes?:** “I will share what limited info I can, to protect BOTH the child and the parent.”

DCFS might call and request more information, if they can’t locate the child. The advocate’s “Plan B,” if they do this, is to tell them:

- **Plan B:** “That’s honestly frustrating for both of us. We both want the child to be protected. I don’t want to withhold information; I do just want to value the parent’s safety, too. I’ve shared what I can—but what is your contact information? If any other distributable info becomes available, I’ll reach out.”

Main Group: Discussion Questions

1. What is the advocate saying “Yes” and “No” to, respectively? How do personal vs. organizational values affect each step?
2. Why is it important for the advocate to value BOTH confidentiality and safety?
3. What does the advocate want? How might that differ from what they should do?
4. What anxieties/concerns would you have about this? Where do you see this going right/wrong?
5. When you need to take professional steps that are not in line with personal values, how do you manage that discomfort?

Individually or as a main group: *In prep for Section Three, review the questions in the pink box below AND the Section Three templates for “Yes! No. Yes?”*

“If I say YES to one thing, I am also saying NO to something else.”

Think of YOUR boundary-setting conversation you need to have, and the values affecting that conversation. Consider the following questions:

- In your boundary-setting situation, what do you want, and what are YOUR values?
- What does the other party want, and what are THEIR values?
- What do you both share in common? What do you seem to value *differently*?
- Why is it important to hold your ground? If the other party reacts poorly to your “No,” what might they do? If you *don’t* hold your ground, what will be the consequences?

Section Three: Breakout Group Application (20 min)

Breakout Groups: Plan a “Yes! No. Yes?” response for your convo. Use the other members of your group for ideas and feedback.

Yes/No/Yes Templates

Using your values from above, draft a “Yes! No. Yes?” response to use in your situation. Feel free to create your own phrases, instead of using these templates!

1. **Yes!:** What do you value *differently*, and what will you do as a result?
 - “I value _____, so I will _____.”
 - “It’s important to me that I _____ because _____.”
 - “I want to _____ because _____.”
2. **No:** How can you say no clearly?
 - “I don’t want to _____.”
 - “I am not going to _____.”
 - “I will not _____.”
3. **Yes?:** State what you *are* able/willing to do.
 - “But I could _____.”
 - “I would be willing to _____.”
 - “If _____, then I’ll _____.”

Section Four: Modeling “Plan B” (20-25 min)

Main Group: Review the “Plan B” from Section Two, then discuss.

DCFS might call and request more information, if they can't locate the child. The advocate's “Plan B,” if they do this, is to tell them:

- **Plan B:** “That’s honestly frustrating for both of us. We both want the child to be protected. I don’t want to withhold information; I do just want to value the parent’s safety, too. I’ve shared what I can—but what is your contact information? If any other distributable info becomes available, I’ll reach out.”

Individually or as a main group: In prep for Section Five, review the information in the pink box below AND the Section Five templates for “Plan B.”

How can I create an effective Plan B?

Sometimes saying “No” by itself is enough. But sometimes, there’s a chance for escalation, backlash, or hurt feelings!

You’re never responsible for managing another person’s emotions. But you can do a lot to keep a high-stakes conversation calm, safe, and effective. One key way to do this is to **reestablish emotional safety** for the other person. This will feel most natural in either the “Yes?” or “Plan B” stages.

In the example above, the advocate used these strategies:

- **Validate emotions in the room** → “That’s honestly frustrating for both of us.”
- **State shared/common goals** → “We both want the child to be protected.”
- **Clarify intentions** → “I don’t want to withhold information; I do just want to value the parent’s safety, too.”
- **Invite them in** → “What is your contact information?”
- **(Re)Identify what you’re willing to do:** “If any other distributable info becomes available, I’ll reach out.”

What other strategies could the advocate have used to reestablish emotional safety? Can you think of examples?

Section Five: “Plan B” Breakout Group Application (20 min)

Breakout Groups: Continuing your response from Section Three, draft a “Plan B” for your boundary-setting convo. Use the other members of your group for ideas and feedback.

Plan B Templates

Draft some responses to reestablish emotional safety, when repeating your “No.” Feel free to create your own phrases, instead of using these templates!

1. Validate emotions in the room (*Consider: What are you and the other party feeling? What are you (or they) afraid of? Why did they expect a yes?*)

- “I think it makes sense that ____.”
- “That is ____ for both of us.”
- “I am feeling ____, and I get the sense you’re feeling ____.”

2. State shared/common goals

- “I think we both want ____.”
- “I know you need to ____, and I want to help you do that.”
- “If we can ____, that’ll work for both of us, right?”

3. Clarify your intentions

- “My goal here is to ____.”
- “I don’t want ____, but I do want ____.”
- “My intent is not to ____, but rather to ____”

4. Invite them in

- “What do you think about ____?”
- “Could you tell me ____?”
- “Help me understand ____?”

5. (Re)Identify what you’re willing to do

- “I can’t ____, but I can ____.”
- “If ____, then I ____.”
- “I’m still going to ____, but I’ll be sure to ____.”

Section Six: Wrap-Up and Evaluate (15 min)

Come back to the main group. What are your takeaways?

This training is brand-new, so [fill out this optional survey](#) to tell us how we did!