

Box 8.3 Danielle

Danielle is a 21-year-old female social work intern. She has been in her internship placement for five weeks. She has completed all the required orientation and training. Danielle and her 15-year-old female client Chaney have met three times before. (See information later in this chapter regarding home visits.) Today, Danielle meets Chaney at the group home and suggests that they go out for ice cream. Danielle asks Chaney what has been happening in the group home since the last time they met. Chaney discloses that she and Jimmy, who is also a group home resident, have started eating together every day at school. She then whispers to Danielle that they have had sex while in the group home (this is a violation of the rules) and that she doesn't like it. Danielle responds by saying, "You shouldn't be having sex with Jimmy."

It is wrong, and you will get kicked out of the group home. Don't tell me anymore about this. Let's forget you said anything at all."

Analysis 1: In this case, Danielle in uncomfortable talking about sex, the violation of group home rules, and the possible consequences of Chaney's decisions. Because of Danielle's discomfort about the situation, she puts her own needs and feelings ahead of Chaney's. She uses her position as the intern to communicate disapproval as well as demonstrating "breaking the rules and trying to cover it up" as her problem-solving strategy. Danielle also communicates that she can't handle the reality of Chaney's situation. She cuts off communication because of her own nervousness and anxiety. This intervention is not helpful to Chaney in any way.

Box 8.4 Danielle, Part 2

Danielle responds by saying, "Oh, do I know what you mean! My boyfriend, Seth, wants to have sex all the time. I wish he would back off sometimes, but I love him and don't want our relationship to end."

Analysis 2: In this case, Danielle is inappropriately self-discussing information that reflects a friendship

rather than a professional relationship. She also takes the focus off Chaney and her situation as she begins to share her own story. Chaney is likely to misinterpret the role of the intern, as she feels obligated to respond to Danielle's struggles with her sexual relationship as well as her own.

Once the client believes that he or she is capable of making positive changes, a sense of worth and a belief in his or her own ability can serve as the guide and motivator throughout the helping relationship and the person's life.

Box 8.3 illustrates how a social work intern, Danielle, allows her own personal views and discomfort interfere with the helping relationship. She abdicates her professional (intern) role to the client.

In Box 8.4, Danielle responds to Chaney as a good friend might. She has difficulty remaining professional as her interest is piqued.

In Box 8.5, Danielle responds more appropriately to Chaney by remaining professional and using her role as an intern to educate and support her client.

Distinguishing between a Friendship and a Professional Relationship

Finding the balance (or maintaining the boundaries) between a **friendship** and a **professional relationship** can be challenging in part because so many of the qualities we find in a good friend are similar to those needed in the helping relationship. For example, trust, care, honesty, and genuineness are essential characteristics of both a friendship and a professional relationship. Box 8.6 provides a list of some similarities and differences between these two types of relationships.

Box 8.5 Danielle, Part 3

Danielle responds by appearing calm and asks Chaney to further describe her relationship with Jimmy. She listens quietly as Chaney discloses that they are not using any kind of birth control and that she feels pressured to have sex with him. She talks with Chaney about breaking the house rules and ways that she can communicate with Jimmy about her fears and concerns. Danielle offers that unprotected sex can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. She also empowers her with information about how to assertively communicate to Jimmy that she doesn't want to have sex with him right now. Simultaneously, Danielle also affirms Chaney's decision to be honest.

Analysis 3: In this revised example, Danielle realistically this information is very important to share with her

internship supervisor and the group home staff, but she is unsure how to proceed, as she also takes into account the bounds of confidentiality. Danielle wants to be helpful to Chaney but also realizes the potential consequences to her behavior. Rather than condemning Chaney and shutting her down, Danielle explored more about the circumstances surrounding her relationship with Jimmy without being judgmental. She provided useful information about birth control, sexually transmitted infections, and saying "no" to his sexual advances. Chaney also encouraged her to tell the group home supervisor about what is happening. Danielle puts her client's well-being above her own discomfort. She responded appropriately within her role as an intern.

Box 8.6 Friendship versus Professional Relationships

Friendship	Professional Relationship
Caring and concern	Caring and concern
Warmth and genuineness	Warmth and genuineness
Supportive and safe	Supportive and safe
Investment of self	Purposeful investment of self
Trust	Trust/confidentiality as defined by the NASW Code of Ethics
Shared interests	Similar or different interests
Comparable levels of disclosure	Unequaled levels of disclosure
Similar or compatible values	Social work values guide the relationship
Physical intimacy/space	Physical proximity and touching is regulated by the NASW Code of Ethics
Friendship has no "fee" attached	Client or other entity pays for services
Roles are fluid	Roles are constant; that is, the client is always the client
Natural progression of the friendship	Beginning, middle, and ending phase of the relationship/time limited/termination
No set agenda or purpose to meeting	Each session has an agenda plan for work toward problem resolution and is purposeful
Feedback/advice is open and unsolicited	Feedback is specific to the problem area
Offering opinions	Offering opinions
Reciprocal (two-way) communication and disclosure/focus is on both parties	Noneciprocal (focus is on the client)
Power differential is determined by parties	Power differential is determined by authority of the position
No formal education or training required	Degreed professional, ongoing training and education; seeks consultation

Source: Based on Bill and Levine (2012), Epam (2014), Swab (2010).