



CROSSING INTIMACY BOUNDARIES

1. TIME TOGETHER ALONE (in person or on the phone)

- increases personal bonding and sense of specialness in the relationship (sets the stage for deeper communication)
- probably has taken some planning. (may include meeting at unusual, secretive locations and/or undue anticipation of future visits, including rearrangement of one's schedule)
- increases the awareness of the need to avoid attracting attention
- often includes attention to clothing or appearance around the "special" individual

(Often intervention by a colleague is very helpful at this point, along with spiritual direction and professional supervision.)

2. MEETING INTIMACY NEEDS

(including excessive self-disclosure and availability, including giving or receiving gifts)

- is fraught with denial as the professional feels the freedom of setting aside professional boundaries for a "truer" or "deeper" relationship with a parishioner
- allows the professional to meet his or her own needs
- involves the professional sharing deeply private material with the parishioner and increasing the feeling of specialness in the relationship
- is often apparent when professional divulges pastoral confidentialities or volatile congregational information (or keeps secrets beyond the requirements of professional confidentiality)

(At this point, counseling and professional supervision is highly recommended.)

3. FREEDOM TO TOUCH

- moves verbal intimacy to the freedom of touching one another (may be explained away as "innocent")
- escalates the relationship and rationalization for it dramatically

(At this point, the denomination usually intervenes.)