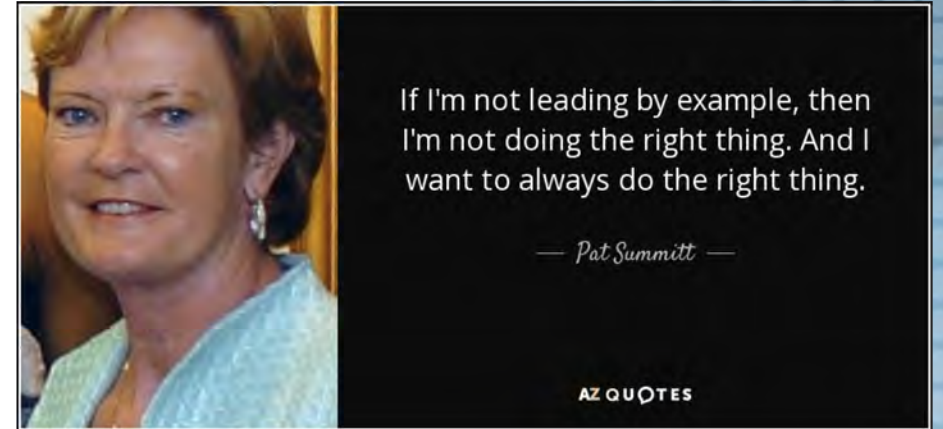


# **Setting Healthy Boundaries Between Coaches and Minors**

**Shelba Waldron  
Director of Education and Training**

# The Professional Coach

- Serve as Role Model
- Demonstrate Leadership
- Knowledgeable about their craft
- Inspire others to be better people
- Know the athlete and treat them as an individual
- Show care and empathy
- Show respect for the family, friends, and life of the athlete outside of the gym



# Understanding Yourself As A Coach

- What am I trying to accomplish?
- What is my personal mission?
- Why do I coach? Am I really in it for the kids?
- What do I really know about the athletes I coach? The families?
- What is my age difference between the athletes? The Parents?
- Is it about me or the athlete? Is this my time or theirs?

# Understanding Your Power

**Coaches who abuse their power often use words such as “My and Mine.”**

“My gym.”

“My rules.”

“My athletes.”

“My decision.”

**Possession**

**They control the situation by turning the situation toward the athlete or family.**

“You screwed up.”

“You are the problem.”

“You didn’t listen.”

**Blame**

# When Media Normalizes Boundary Violations

Monica: So how did you guys meet?

Frank: Well um, I was in Mrs. Knight's—ah, I mean Alice, sorry.

Alice. I always do that. I was in her Home Ec class.

Alice: And he was my best student.

Frank: Yeah, she was my best teacher.

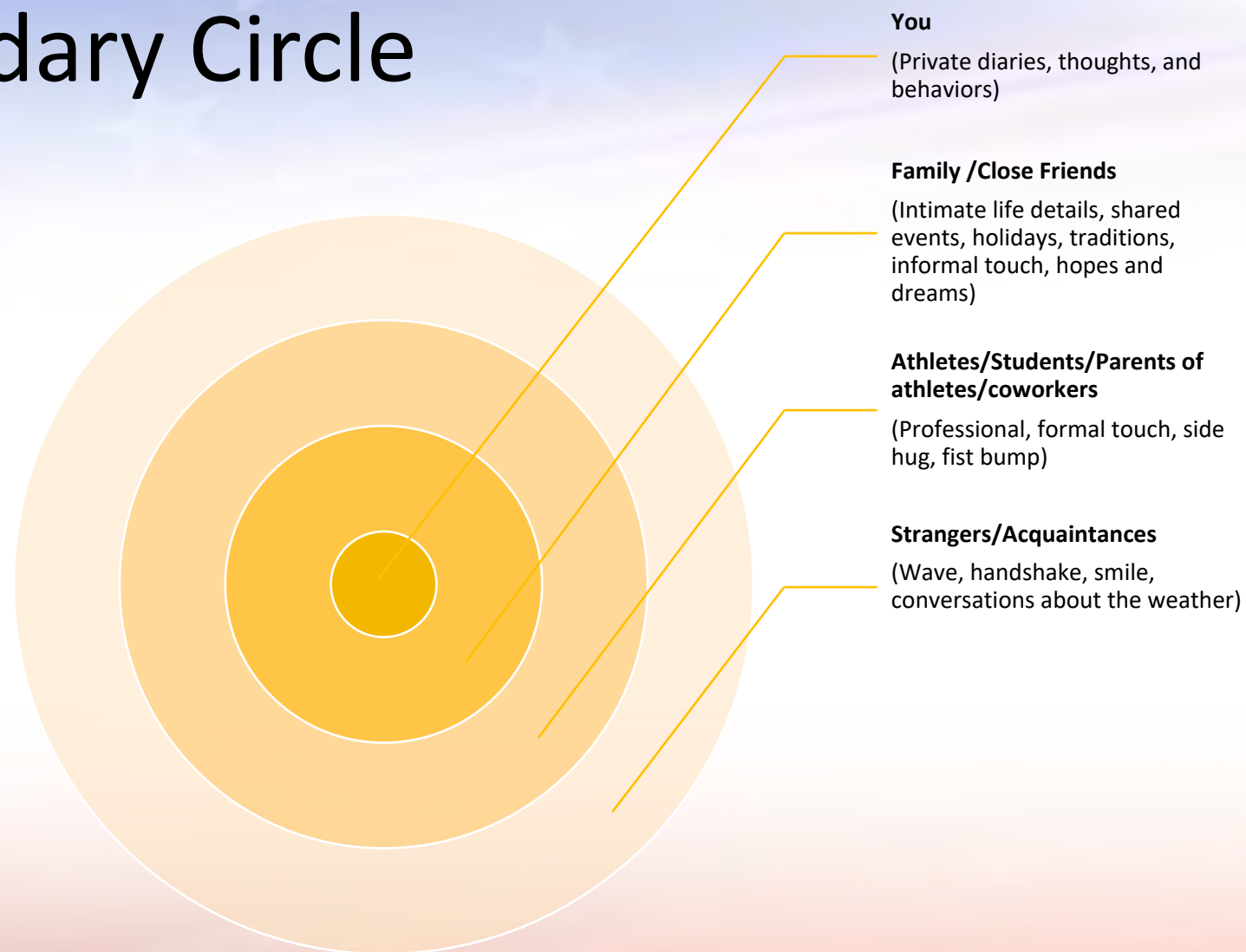




**Not quite my tempo!**



# Your Boundary Circle



**Boundaries define areas of privacy and helps set standards as the coaching/athlete relationship grows stronger over time.**

# Line of Site



What can you see from your physical location? What is your awareness level?



# It's All About Boundaries

## Observable and Interruptible

Simply put, all interactions with athletes must be able to be observed and interruptible by another person and remain professional at all times.

*A boundary is a personal space that you keep between yourself and others. It defines “**where I end and you begin.**”*

# Knowing Your Triggers

- What is your mood when you start work?
- Are you struggling with anything of seriousness in your life?
- Are you overwhelmed with other aspects of your life?
- Are you lonely?
- Do you have friends in your life to share your successes and failures?
- Do you have interests outside of your coaching responsibilities?

# Transference

Transference occurs when a person begins to experience unconscious feelings about the coach as either a parent or partner.

- This occurs for a number of reasons:
- Proximity
- Time spent within that proximity
- Sharing emotions, life history, past traumas, etc.
- Helping the athlete during stressful or extreme times
- Crossing out of scope of practice from coach to counselor

*Can I talk to you for a moment?*

# What do Healthy Boundaries Look Like

**Consistent**



**Inclusive**

**The coach-athlete relationship is not equal**

# Physical Boundaries

- Touch
- Space
- Proximity
- Phone number
- Home
- Car



# Social Boundaries

Social Boundaries are how you interact in your world.

- Personal Hangouts
- Politics
- Religious Beliefs
- Lifestyle
- Personal Relationships
- Social Media Relationships

**Hey Coach Scott, what did you do this weekend?**

**How are you and your girlfriend doing?**

**Who did you vote for in the election?**

# Emotional/Verbal Boundaries

- Feelings
- Relationships
- Information Sharing
- Personal secrets
- Private club and staff information
- Private jokes, sarcasm



**How will what you are saying sound read back to you in in front of the parents, the front page of the news or a court of law?**

# Where the Boundaries Begin to Erode

It starts simple:

- Friending on social media
- Sharing phone numbers
- Finding time alone while remaining in the club environment
- Sharing personal email addresses
- Small gifts such as a soda after practice or a small gift for a job well done



## What to do when the child violates the boundary guidelines?

- Set the boundaries at the very beginning
- Explain why the professional relationship is so important
- Help them understand why you can't be friends
- Include the parents if necessary
- Show them from the beginning that all interactions will be open and interruptible
- If there is a gift given that isn't related to an appropriate time of the year such as Christmas and if that gift isn't appropriate, then it needs to be returned with kindness and empathy.

# Building Relationships with the Parents

Professionalism with parents allows for objective distance so both parties understand where the lines are drawn between roles.

Parent and coach relationships should share:

- Mutually agreed upon boundaries
- Respect for each others role
- Respect for each others time
- Respect for each others money

# Thank you!

## **For more information:**

You may contact the USA Gymnastics  
helpline at:

833-844-7233

Or

[Swaldron@usagym.org](mailto:Swaldron@usagym.org)

## **To make a report to USA Gymnastics:**

<https://usagym.org/safesport/>

## **To make a report to the U.S. Center for SafeSport:**

<https://safesport.org/report-a-concern>