

# ***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.)