

A Recovery Bill of Rights for Trauma Survivors

By Thomas V. Maguire, Ph.D.



BY VIRTUE OF YOUR PERSONAL AUTHORITY YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

Manage your life according to your own values and judgment.

Direct your recovery, answerable to no one for your goals or progress.

Gather information to make intelligent decisions about your recovery.

Seek help from many sources, unhindered by demands for exclusivity.

Decline help from anyone without having to justify the decision.

Believe in your ability to heal and seek allies who share your faith.

Trust allies in healing so far as one human can trust another.

Be afraid and avoid what frightens you.

Decide for yourself whether, when, and where to confront fear.

Learn by experimenting, that is, make mistakes.



TO GUARD YOUR PERSONAL BOUNDARIES YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

Speak or remain silent, about any topic and at any time, as you wish.

Choose to accept or decline feedback, suggestions, or interpretations.

Ask for help in healing, without having to accept help with everything.

Be touched only with, and within the limits of, your consent.

Take action to stop a trespass that does not cease when challenged.

Challenge any crossing of your boundaries.



FOR THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR PERSONAL COMMUNICATION YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

Ask for explanation of communications you do not understand.

Express a contrary view when you do understand and you disagree.

Acknowledge your feelings, without having to justify them.

Ask for changes when your needs are not being met.



Speak of your experience, without apology for your uncertainties.

Resolve doubt without deferring to the views or wishes of anyone.

FOR SAFETY IN YOUR PERSONAL DEPENDENCY IN THERAPY YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

- Hire a therapist or counselor as coach, not boss, of your recovery.
- Receive expert and faithful assistance in healing from your therapist.
- Know that your therapist will never have any other relationship with you— business, social, or sexual.
- Be secure against any disclosure by your therapist, except with your consent or under court order.
- Hold your therapist's undivided loyalty in relation to all abusers.
- Obtain informative answers to questions about your condition, your therapist's qualifications, and any proposed treatment.
- Have your safety given priority by your therapist, to the point of readiness to use all lawful means to neutralize an imminent threat to your life or that of someone else.
- Receive a commitment from your therapist that is not conditional on your "good behavior" (habitual crime and endangerment excepted).
- Make clear and reliable agreements about the times of sessions and of your therapist's availability.
- Telephone your therapist between scheduled sessions, in urgent need, and receive a return call within a reasonable time.
- Be taught skills that lessen the risk of re-traumatization:
 - containment (boundaries for recovery work);
 - control of attention and mental imagery;
 - systematic relaxation.
- Enjoy reasonable physical comfort during sessions.

