

Grades 6-8

Category: Peer Relationships

Topic: Creating Healthy Boundaries

Where Do You Draw the Line?

Background

Bullying prevention involves teaching students to consider how they behave toward others. But it's also important for them to consider which behaviors they will or won't accept from others. Establishing these personal boundaries is a way we protect and take care of ourselves. We need to be able to tell other people when they behave in ways that are not acceptable or when things they do hurt us. Learning how to set boundaries is a necessary step in learning to take care of our own needs. It is our responsibility to decide where we draw the line when others are not respectful and to make choices as to how we treat them. Learning to set clear and healthy boundaries is especially important for students this age as they deal with peer pressure and prepare for dating relationships. This class meeting could be extended to two class meetings.

Learner Outcomes

By the end of this session, students will be able to

- define the term "personal boundaries"
- consider where they draw the line in how they are treated by others
- discuss ways to set limits or draw the line without being unkind or excluding others

Materials Needed

- Chalkboard and chalk or dry erase board and markers
- Setting Healthy Boundaries Worksheet on page 138
- Pencils

Preparation Needed

- Make a copy of the worksheet for each student.

Class Meeting Outline

Opening Activity (15 Minutes)

1. Many games involve boundaries or rules that set limits on play. For example, sports such as football and tennis have boundary lines that define where participants can play. Can you think of other examples of games where there are either rules or physical boundaries about play?
2. What is the purpose of these kinds of boundaries? (They set expectations so that everyone knows what is acceptable and what is not. Lines define clear limits that show us exactly where we can play.) What happens when we step on or over boundary lines? How many of you have heard the phrase "crossing the line"? The phrase comes from sports and usually refers to behavior that isn't okay. Can you give some examples of behaviors that might cross the line?
3. Today, we're going to discuss ways we create personal boundaries. Personal boundaries are like invisible lines that protect us and help us set healthy limits to deal with behaviors that cross the line for each of us. Setting personal boundaries in our own lives helps us define the way we want others to treat us and when those boundaries have been violated.

Teacher Tips



Here are more ideas to help explain the concept of personal boundaries:

- Setting and preserving personal boundaries allows you to take care of yourself, resist unhealthy forms of peer pressure, develop strong relationships, and make healthy choices in different social situations.
- Setting boundaries reflects your right to say NO to choices that aren't right for you or that make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Respecting another's personal boundaries is a sign of respect.
- Boundaries emerge as you learn to value, trust, and listen to yourself. They come from a belief that what you want, need, like, and dislike is important and that you deserve to be treated with respect.

4. We each need personal boundaries to help us feel safe and keep us healthy. Take 2 minutes with a partner to discuss possible situations where it would be useful or a healthy choice to set personal boundaries about the way people treat you. Distribute copies of the Setting Healthy Boundaries Worksheet. Give students another 5 minutes to discuss the situations on the worksheet.
5. Bring the students back together in the large group. Let's hear a few of your ideas about situations when it would be a healthy choice to set personal boundaries for yourselves. Share group ideas and write them on the board.

Discussion Questions (20 minutes)

1. How did you determine where you draw the line about the different behaviors that you discussed on the worksheet?
2. What behaviors are you not willing to accept from others? Write the students' ideas on the board.
3. Close friends share a lot of personal information in confidence with each other.
 - What if someone asks you for information about a friend? How do you decide what information should be kept private or confidential?
 - What should you do if you made a mistake in sharing too much information about yourself or a friend?
 - What if at some time you are no longer friends? What information might another person have about you that could be very embarrassing if that information was made public?
4. Where do you draw the line in terms of maintaining a relationship with a person who does not respect your boundaries?
5. What are positive things that you can do for yourself when your personal boundaries are not respected in a relationship? How does a person draw the line? (Responses might include talking about their feelings with a trusted adult or friend, assertively telling the other person how they feel about the situation, considering when to stop being friends with someone, or reporting serious problems to an adult at school or an adult at home.)

6. Respecting others' physical space or boundaries, even when they are different from our own, shows respect for them. When have your personal boundaries differed from or conflicted with someone else's? What are ways you show respect for someone else's personal boundaries? What is the difference between a personal boundary and excluding or being unkind?

Wrap-Up

1. Personal boundaries are individual choices we set for ourselves. They differ from person to person and may change over time. Personal boundaries help us to understand who we are and how we would like to be treated in relationships with others. They help us identify when behaviors cross the line and make us feel uncomfortable.
2. Encourage additional questions and comments.

Curriculum Connections

Vocabulary: *comfort zone, limits, personal boundaries, physical space, violation/violate*

History/Geography: Have students discuss political boundaries and how countries relate to each other. Is there a formal protocol for establishing relationships with other countries? What courtesy is extended to other countries in establishing relationships? What happens when boundaries are crossed without mutual agreement or there are disputes about what or where boundaries should be?

Activity



Setting Healthy Boundaries Worksheet

Instructions: Read each situation. Place a Y, N, or D to indicate how that situation relates to your personal boundaries.

Y = yes, it is within my boundaries

N = no, it is outside of my boundaries

D = it depends

- _____ 1. A friend who sits with you at lunch wants to borrow \$20. He says he'll pay you back next week.
- _____ 2. A girl from your math class asks you to call a boy you know and tell him she wants to go out with him.
- _____ 3. Someone whose locker is near yours is always putting his/her arm around you every chance he/she gets.
- _____ 4. Your friends are always teasing you about how studious you are.
- _____ 5. A girl from English class asks to borrow the paper you wrote so she can get some ideas for hers.
- _____ 6. You've been trying to get together with a new friend, and something always seems to get in the way. He's cancelled four times.
- _____ 7. Everyone in your group is going to play a practical joke on another group member, and they want you to go along with it. The plan is to fill the person's locker with sand.
- _____ 8. A boy you know often walks by you in the cafeteria, smiles, and takes your drink from your lunch tray and doesn't return it.
- _____ 9. You befriended someone in a chat room. That person begins to ask you very personal questions.