

My Boundaries

A Lesson Plan from *Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 12th grade, students will be able to:

HR.12.IC.2 – Demonstrate effective ways to communicate personal boundaries as they relate to intimacy and sexual behavior.

HR.12.SM.1 – Demonstrate respect for the boundaries of others as they relate to intimacy and sexual behavior.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 11
Lesson 2

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers
- Handout: "My Boundaries" – one per student
- Three signs: "Describes Me Completely," "Describes Me Somewhat," "Does Not Describe Me At All" – each of which should be on a different color paper
- Masking tape
- Extra pencils in case students don't have their own

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

Post the three signs in three different locations in the classroom with enough room near each so that students can stand nearby.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define what a boundary is. [Knowledge]
2. Explain at least two examples of types of boundaries. [Knowledge]
3. Clarify what their own boundaries are in relation to physical touch. [Affect]
4. Demonstrate an understanding for the need to communicate about boundaries in a romantic or sexual relationship. [Knowledge]

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Start class by saying, "Today we're going to talk about the topic of boundaries. Let's start by defining that – what is a boundary?" Write some of the student responses on the board. Sample responses might include, "Something that blocks something else from happening," "a border," "a fence," etc.

Say, "A boundary is a physical or psychological limit that's set up to show how far something goes. There are all kinds of boundaries (write the types on the board as you go through them):

- **Environmental** boundaries include a country's or state's borders. They can also refer to restricted areas of a building. For instance, here at school we have the Teachers' Lounge, or the office.
- **Process** boundaries refer to the parameters around how things happen. These include starting and ending class and school on

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time, getting to a doctor's appointment on time, or doing homework before watching a movie, etc.

- **Physical boundaries** include not only whether you have any kind of physical contact with another person, but how much. For example, you may be okay shaking hands with a particular person, but don't want to hug them. You may love to hug, but end up hugging someone who hates to be hugged. You may not be interested in having sex with someone, but you might be okay doing other sexual things with that person.
- **Personal boundaries** refer to how much you share of your personal life. What do you keep private? What do you tell other people?"

Say, "Today, we're going to be focusing on our physical and personal boundaries – what we're comfortable with, and what to do if we're with someone whose boundaries are different from ours." (6 minutes)

STEP 2: Distribute the worksheet, "My Boundaries," and ask students NOT to write their names at the top. Tell them that the sheet asks a number of hypothetical "what would you do" questions for which they are supposed to answer honestly. Tell them they will have about eight minutes to do this, and that when they're done, to please turn the worksheet face down. Remind them again that they should NOT write their names on their worksheets, as you will be discussing the responses in a way that keeps their identity confidential. (10 minutes)

STEP 3: After about 8 minutes, collect the sheets, keeping them face down. Mix them up. Then say, "I am going to redistribute the worksheets now. This way you will be representing someone else's answers honestly, but not your own. Most of you will not get the same worksheet you wrote on. If you do, please don't say anything! We want to keep this confidential." Distribute the worksheets. Point to the signs around the room and say, "We are now going to go through the answers. I am going to read each statement, and you are going to stand beneath the sign that represents what is on your worksheet, not your own opinion. Even though the two may be the same, please don't share if they are. Please also don't share if you disagree with that statement."

Begin reading through each of the statements. Once students are in place, ask them to look around the room and notice how many people are standing beneath which sign.

Once you have gone through all the statements, ask students to hold on to the worksheets they have and return to their seats. Process by asking the following questions:

- Thinking about both the experience of completing the worksheet individually, and then standing under the signs of someone else's worksheet – what was it like to do that? What was (student responses, e.g. interesting) about it?
- What did you notice about where people stood? Did you notice that there was a lot of agreement, or was there more variety regarding how people in this class feel about these boundaries?

Say, "Recognizing your own boundaries is one thing, but to make certain that you have consent, it's equally important to know what your partner's boundaries are, and that takes communication. What if you have different boundaries? Let's look at that now."

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Divide students into pairs. Ask them to use the worksheets they have to talk about how similar and how different these two people's boundaries are. Ask them to discuss what they think they should do in situations where there is complete disagreement. For example, if one person has "describes me completely" and the other person has "does not describe me at all," as well as what to do if either or both selected "describes me somewhat."

Note to the Teacher: *While it is possible for two people to get worksheets with the exact same responses, it is not likely to happen.* (16 minutes)

STEP 4: After about 8 minutes, ask students to stop their paired discussions. Ask for volunteers to give examples of statements where the two people are at opposite ends of the spectrum. Once they've read the statement aloud, have them share what they discussed. Ask other students what their reaction is to what they heard.

For example: Say one person says they don't mind being hugged from behind, and one person does not like it at all. What does each partner need to do about that? Probe for the fact that the person who does not like to be hugged from behind needs to tell their partner so that this doesn't happen to them – and so the partner knows. Then the partner needs to respect that boundary and not do it once they've been told.

Continue to discuss the examples, including those in which one or both partner said the statement described them "somewhat." Talk about the concerns of there being some wiggle room and how this can confuse either partner.

Ask, "What does getting consent mean?" Take a few responses and say, "If you haven't communicated about what you each feel comfortable doing, sometimes even if you have, you need to ask for consent each and every time. Silence does not mean yes. Only yes means yes." (13 minutes)

STEP 5: Ask, "Think about what everyone just shared – what themes did you hear? When you're in a relationship with someone, what are your rights and responsibilities when it comes to your boundaries and theirs?" Record responses on the board. If the following aren't shared, be sure to add them:

- **Be clear!** Your partner can't read your mind. If a boundary is important to you, speak up.
- **Don't push.** People can have all sorts of reasons for maintaining a physical boundary in a relationship. It could be as simple as they just don't like doing something to something. Alternatively, it could be more intense as they were sexually assaulted and that behavior triggers them to remember the assault.
- **Always ask for consent.** An absolute yes and an absolute no are usually easier to understand than a "sometimes." If you or your partner are sometimes okay doing something, and sometimes not okay, how will you be able to tell when that is? Only by asking.

Say, "Relationships of all kinds – family relationships, friendships, ect. – require good communication. However, when it comes to intimate and sexual relationships, communication is even more important. Although we all communicate in different ways, it's important to communicate before, during, and after a sexual encounter." (5 minutes)

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RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The setup of the lesson will achieve the first and second learning objectives. The “My Boundaries” activity will achieve the third learning objective. The full-class process and paired discussions will fulfill the fourth learning objective.

HOMEWORK:

None.

Worksheet: My Boundaries

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate response below. Please do NOT put your name on this worksheet!

1. If I'm in a relationship with someone, I want to hold hands and walk with our arms around each other to show people we're together.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

2. When I'm watching tv with my partner, I want my own space – I don't want us to snuggle or lean on each other.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

3. When I see someone I know, I'll greet them physically in some way – a hug, handshake, punch on the arm, etc.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

4. I don't like it when someone hugs me from behind.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

5. I think having some form of sex is what makes a relationship a relationship.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

6. I think if one person really wants to try something new sexually, the other person should at least be willing to try it once.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

7. I enjoy play wrestling with a partner.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

8. I think that if you're in a relationship with someone you kind of "belong" to each other. I should be able to touch them, and they should be able to touch me – whenever – and wherever – we want.

Describes Me Completely Describes Me Somewhat Doesn't Describe Me At All

**Describes Me
Completely**

**Describes Me
Somewhat**

**Does Not
Describe Me
At All**