



Every Student Matters, Every Moment Counts

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Grade: 11th Grade ▾ Content: Social-Emotional Education ▾

Title: My Boundaries

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

NSES Alignment:

- 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.

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

Learning Objective: 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 boundaries are concerning physical touch. [Affect]
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the need to communicate about boundaries in a romantic or sexual relationship. [Knowledge]

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, we have the Teachers’ Lounge or the office at school.
- Process boundaries refer to the parameters around how things happen. These include starting and ending class and school on 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 physical contact with another person, but how much. For example, you may be okay shaking hands with a person but don’t want to hug them. You may love to hug but

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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."

Step 2: Distribute the worksheet, "My Boundaries," and ask students NOT to write their names at the top. Tell them that the sheet asks several 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, please turn the worksheet face down. Remind them again that they should NOT write their names on their worksheets, as you will discuss the responses in a way that keeps their identity confidential.

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 represent someone else's answers honestly, not your own. Most of you will not get the same worksheet you wrote. 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 will read each statement, and you will stand beneath the sign that represents what is on your worksheet, not your 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 their worksheets and return to their seats. Help the students process by asking the following questions:

- Thinking about 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 were (student responses, e.g., interesting) about it?
- What did you notice about where people stood? Did you notice 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 your partner's boundaries, and that takes communication. What if you have different boundaries? Let's look at that now."

Divide students into pairs. Ask them to use the worksheets they have to discuss how similar and different these two people's boundaries are. Ask them to discuss what they think they should do when 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."

Step 4: After about 8 minutes, ask students to stop their paired discussions. Ask 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. 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 partners said the statement described them "somewhat." Talk about the concerns of 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 every time. Silence does not mean yes. Only yes means yes."

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 regarding your boundaries and theirs?" Record responses on the board. If the following isn'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 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, etc. – require good communication. However, communication is even more important when it comes to intimate and sexual relationships. Although we all communicate differently, it's important to communicate before, during, and after a sexual encounter."

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: n/a