Understanding Boundaries

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

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 6, 7, 8

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board or flipchart, markers
- White board or flipchart pad
- Masking tape
- Worksheet: "Setting and Respecting Boundaries" – one copy for every three students
- Homework: "What's Your Advice?" – one per student
- One letter-sized envelope
- National Sexual Assault and Prevention Hotline/Website sheets, individually cut and placed in the envelope - one per student
- Pencils in case students do not have their own

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Print out a copy of the "National Sexual Assault and Prevention Hotline/Website" sheet, and cut into individual squares. Place these in an envelope.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Define what a boundary is, with an emphasis on personal boundaries. [Knowledge]
2. Demonstrate how to be clear about one's own and show respect for others' boundaries. [Knowledge]
3. Demonstrate an understanding that no one has the right to violate someone else's boundaries, and that doing so may be against the law. [Knowledge]
4. Name at least one resource to whom they can report sexual assault or rape. [Knowledge]

Note to the Teacher: *The topic of this class can sometimes lead to a student discussing abuse or assault they have experienced, or that someone else in the class or school has experienced. If a student were to share an example during class, you will have to take action according to your school's policies and state law. Please see our Teacher Background materials about how to manage this in the classroom were it to happen.*

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: Ask the class whether they've ever heard the term "boundary" before. After they have responded, explain that a boundary is a limit placed on something. It can be an actual physical boundary – like if one were to come upon a sign that read, "Do Not Enter" – or a rule about how society works – like the law that says people can't drive cars or vote until they're a particular age.

Explain that today's lesson is going to focus on personal boundaries. These are the boundaries we set for ourselves relating to what we are and aren't comfortable with. Ask whether any students can provide examples of personal boundaries? Probe for: physical contact (hugging, kissing); keeping your personal space around you/not being crowded; language (when people use language that others find offensive, that also violates a boundary); sharing personal information when ready or at all; when someone uses or borrows your stuff without asking, etc.

Explain that every person has the right to set their own boundaries. The reason each person sets their own boundaries is based on their own experiences, their personal values, how comfortable they feel, the individual person or situation they're in.

Ask the students to provide an example of a physical boundary they have. Then ask whether anyone has ever had someone not respect their physical boundaries, and how that felt. Finally, ask whether anyone is willing to share a time when they didn't respect someone else's boundary. If they give an example, ask them to describe why, if they can recall, they did that, how they knew they'd gone over that boundary and what the other person did in response. If no one has or is willing to provide an example, talk about when an adult family member expects a hug or a kiss and you don't feel like hugging or kissing that person yet are expected to. Another example is a younger person being told they need to share their stuff with a younger sibling when they don't want to.
(10 minutes)

STEP 2: Explain, from the examples given, that clearly people don't like it when someone sets a personal boundary and someone else doesn't respect that boundary.

Break the class into groups of 3. Tell them you are going to give them a worksheet with some scenarios on them. Ask them to complete the sheets in their groups. Distribute one sheet per triad, telling them they will have about 10 minutes in which to complete them. *(15 minutes)*

STEP 3: After about ten minutes of working, ask for the class' attention and ask a volunteer to read the first example. Ask different groups to share what they thought about how each person in the scenario responded, as well as what they could have done differently. As students respond, write key words on the board or flipchart paper to reinforce effective communication about boundaries. Examples of these might include: "be clear," "stop when someone says no," "be direct but try not to be mean about it," etc.

Have a different student read the remaining examples aloud and again ask for volunteers from different groups to share their responses to the two questions. If they

refer to something already written on the board, write a check mark next to that term/ phrase; if they contribute something new, add it to the list. *(15 minutes)*

Note to the Teacher: *Depending on the type of class you have, you may wish to have students actually role play these scenarios at the front of the class so they can see these suggestions in action to determine what was most useful or helpful and why.*

STEP 4: Ask the students to look at what's on the board and describe what themes or lessons they notice in what's written, probing for the importance of knowing and being clear about what your boundaries are, and of finding out what someone else's boundaries are and respecting them, including if they were to change.

Say, "These are pretty low-key behaviors and boundaries we're discussing – but it can get far more serious than this." Ask the students whether they have ever heard the terms "rape" or "sexual assault" before, and if so, what they understand it to be. Probe for, "it is when someone forces another person to do something sexual that they don't want to do." Explain that rape usually involves some kind of forced sex – vaginal, oral or anal – but that if a person does other sexual things to another person who didn't want to do those things, it's considered sexual assault or abuse, and is just as wrong as rape is.

Explain, "Rape and sexual assault are extremely serious because they can hurt someone physically and emotionally. They are not just wrong, they are crimes. So if you aren't sure what another person's boundaries are – or, like Max, push it a bit to see if the other person will change their mind – you may end up committing a crime. These crimes are called sexual offenses. This is another reason why clear communication is so important – if you're not sure how someone else is feeling or what they want to do sexually, just ask. If you don't like what you're doing sexually with another person, say you want to stop – and then stop."

Finally, tell the class, "The most important message I'd like you to walk away with is that the person who doesn't respect boundaries – the person who pushes it or assaults or rapes another person – is always responsible for what happens. If someone says 'no,' you need to stop what you're doing. If you don't like what someone is doing, you need to say 'no' really clearly. If someone does sexually assault or rape another person, it is never the fault of the person who has been assaulted or raped. The abuser or rapist is always in the wrong – it doesn't matter what the person who was raped was wearing, or whether they knew each other, were a couple or had done something sexual together before. No means no – every single time. Even if someone is silent, they have not given consent." *(7 minutes)*

STEP 5: Take the envelope with the individual squares that contain the sexual assault hotline and website on them, and begin to walk around the room, giving one to each student. As you walk, say, "It's always best if you can talk with a parent/caregiver about something serious that's happened to you or someone you know. You can also always talk with another trusted adult, like someone here at school. But sometimes, people – both kids and adults – find it really hard to talk about sexual assault. That's why there's this hotline, which you can access by calling or going online. In the end, it doesn't matter who you talk with about this – what matters is that you tell someone so that it stops and so that person can't do it to anyone else."

Distribute the homework sheet, "What's Your Advice?" and ask them to complete it and bring it to the next class. *(3 minutes)*

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The content messages of the learning objectives are provided in the teacher's lecturette; the small group activity will help the teacher assess learning objectives one and two; three will be assessed by observation during the last discussion. The homework will provide an opportunity to assess individual understanding as they relate to objectives one and two.

HOMEWORK:

The "My Personal Boundary Plan" and respond to the questions. **Explain that students will not be asked to turn in the homework because it includes information about setting their own personal boundaries and how they might communicate it. Instead, students will share whether or not they've done their homework via the honesty policy.**

Worksheet:
Setting and Respecting Boundaries

Instructions: *Please read each example and discuss in your groups how you think the characters should handle each situation. Elect one person to be the writer and have that person record your answers in the space provided.*

1. Amy and Jesse are one of the first couples in 7th grade. Amy loves that everyone knows they're a couple, and always holds Jesse's hand in the hallway or puts her arm around Jesse. Jesse really likes Amy, but has never been a really physical person and doesn't like the public touching. The next time Amy sees Jesse at school, she wraps her arm around Jesse's waist, gives a gentle squeeze and says, "Hi!" Jesse, embarrassed, says, "You don't have to do that every time we see each other." Amy pulls back immediately, says "fine" and walks away.

How do you think Jesse handled this? What could/should Jesse have done differently?

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_____

How do you think Amy handled this? What could/should Amy have done differently?

_____

_____

2. Max and Julia spend a lot of time together now that they're a couple. When they find some private time alone, they like to kiss a lot. Max really wants to do something more, and so the next time they're alone together, he tries to pull Julia's shirt up and reach for one of her breasts. She pulls it back down and says, "No," but keeps kissing Max. He tries again, and she says, "Max, no." Max remembers seeing in a movie that if you keep trying, sometimes the other person gives in – so he tries again. Julia pushes him off, stops kissing him, and says, "I'm going home" and leaves.

How do you think Max handled this? What could/should Max have done differently?

_____

_____

How do you think Julia handled this? What could/should Julia have done differently?

_____

_____

3. Timothy just moved into town and recently became friends with Marcus. They both enjoy skateboarding around the neighborhood and getting drinks together at the convivence store afterwards. One day as they are walking home, Marcus starts to ask Timothy questions about his old town and why he moved, but Timothy really doesn't want to answer. He just keeps shrugging and says, "I don't know" and tries to change the subject. Marcus keeps asking and doesn't understand what the big deal is.

How do you think Marcus handled this? What could/should Marcus have done differently?

_____

_____

How do you think Timothy handled this? What could/should Timothy have done differently?

_____

_____

3. Maria and Luis are best friends. Maria is nonverbal communicator which means she does not communicate using words. Luis really wants to hold Maria's hand during recess. Louis asks Maria if he can hold her hand during recess and goes to grab her hand. Maria pulls her hand back and shakes her head no. Louis is confused and does not understand why his best friend does not want to hold his hand, but understands that she may not feel comfortable and apologizes.

How do you think Louis handled this? What could/should have done differently?

_____

_____

How do you think Maria handled this? What could/should Maria have done differently?

_____

_____

Was there consent from each person in this situation? Why or why not?

_____

_____

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT PHONE HOTLINE

800.656.HOPE (4673)
https://ohl.rainn.org/online/

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Homework: Your Personal Boundary Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: *Read each of the questions below and respond. This homework will not be submitted. Instead you will let you know teacher know you've done the homework using the Honesty Policy.*

1. What are some personal boundaries that are important to you? Name an example below (eg, having privacy when you're getting ready in the bathroom in the morning; not hugging a person without them asking first).

2. Who is a person in your life who could support you in sticking to the boundaries you have set for yourself at this point in your life? (eg, a counselor or parent)

2. What are some ways you can use to communicate your boundaries with others? Come up with three ways you could say that another person is crossing your personal boundaries below. (eg, "Please stop. I'm not willing to do anything but kiss.")