

Lesson 3 for Grades 6-8

Partnering with Parents & Guardians for Safety: *Boundaries: You Have Rights!*

PRINCIPLE

Children must learn how to respect their own health and safety and the safety of others, by understanding the difference between safe and unsafe individuals. In this way, we work together to prevent / reduce the risk of sexual abuse and boundary violations.

OBJECTIVES

After lesson 3, children should be able to:

- Identify various types of boundaries
- Begin to set their own boundaries and communicate them to others
- Honor appropriate boundaries indifferent types of relationships
- Understand boundaries can apply for Online activities

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1738 (1997)

Background for Parents and Guardians:

In preparation for teaching this lesson and to lead the activities, review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*.

Before sitting down with your child(ren) and beginning the activities, read through this entire lesson and view the video. Choose the activities that you are most comfortable with first and gradually moving to the others. You will find it is helpful to have the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide* handy to navigate the lesson material. These activities are intended to empower young people to think about safety issues with you as their partner.

Considerations for the age groups—

Grades 6-8 Children of this age are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. This is the age where puberty may begin or has already. It is not always “cool” to say that you must tell someone if you are touched or approached (in person, or online) in an inappropriate or sexual way. These situations may create feelings of immense shame, guilt, threats, etc., for the youth. Good communication while speaking to this age group should be stressed. With this age group it will be important to stress “healthy” behavior and boundaries, and the “right thing to do” when boundaries are violated.

Activity #1: Introductory Video

Directions: View and discuss the introductory video with your child. The introductory video for all grades is designed to open a simple discussion with children about personal boundaries and touching safety. The video is approximately six minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the activities. It's merely an intro designed to “break the ice” and assist the transition into completing the interactive Lesson Activity options. It can be used in to introduce any of the following activities. Discussion and practice are the critical components needed to teach children how to protect themselves. They learn best by “doing”; not just listening or watching.

Grades 6-8 Video links:

English 6 – 8: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/P3RoYAYkDQ4>

Spanish 6 – 8: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/XBN8gsD8A7U>

Activity #2: Review and Discuss Vocabulary words in an age-appropriate way with your child

Rules—a prescribed guide for conduct or action. We follow the rules to make sure we are safe—just like how we have a seatbelt rule to keep us safe in the car, or the safety rules before we cross the street. [For example, teach the child a simple rule for what to do if someone tries to touch him / her in an unsafe way, which is to say “No!”, try to get away, and tell an adult as soon as possible.]

Limits—the point or edge beyond which something cannot go. The furthest edge of something.

Rights—We are all born free and equal and have certain rights that are automatically ours. Everyone is entitled to these rights, and they should not be taken away from us. For example, teach children, “you have a right to be safe, and your body belongs to you!”

Boundaries—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can’t see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our “personal space”). Boundaries vary depending on the relationship with the other person. For example, a boundary between a child and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a child and a teacher or coach.

Saying “No”—to say “no” means to refuse, deny, reject or express disapproval of. This word is used to express a boundary and communicate that you do not want something to happen or continue. [Let children know It’s OK to say “No” to an adult if they make you feel scared or uncomfortable, or if they touch your private body parts.]

Secret—something kept hidden, never told or explained. Secrets exclude others and have potential to harm, sometimes causing the person involved to feel frightened or uncomfortable. [For example, let children know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell children that it’s wrong for an adult or another child to ask a child to keep a secret about safety—especially unsafe touches—because that’s a way for people to get hurt. If an individual tries to make a child keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the child must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the child will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of “telling”.]

Activity #3: You are Worthy—Own your life!

Activity: This activity involves reviewing the worksheet at the end of this lesson plan. Your child should select from multiple choices the best response to relationships and any boundary issues that need to be addressed. You can then initiate a discussion to give your child tools for how to place and strengthen their boundaries.

Directions: Begin the discussion with the handout.

Discussion: Since boundaries are based on our own value systems, perspectives, experience, family environment and culture, our boundaries may differ from others. This is totally OK! But it isn’t OK when it comes to being safe.

Read the lesson worksheet together and ask your child to fill it out with answers that are as honest as possible. Explain that there are 3 possible answers that they can circle:

1. *Yes*: which means that the scenarios actually occurring in their life, or they think it is
2. *Possibly*: which means that the scenario might be occurring, or that it’s likely. If there’s any hint of doubt, then this is the answer to select.
3. *Not applicable to anyone in my life*: means that the particular type of scenario doesn’t seem to be occurring from the youth’s perspective.

Tell your child to take their time discerning their responses.

Continue with the discussion and this series of questions and statements:

- This is a good self-analysis, but if you selected, “Not applicable to anyone in my life, ‘would your best friend feel differently about some of the examples and your responses? (This question is not listed to devalue the thoughts and feelings of the youth, but to introduce the thought that sometimes other people can see more clearly than we can when we’re deep into a situation.)
- When you’re thinking about the people that caused these “yes” or even the “possibly” answers, do you think that something needs to happen? (Answer: YES, boundaries need to be addressed)

- Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where our boundaries are violated—we can see that by looking at the examples on the sheet. Is it OK to set a boundary, increase the ones we already have or remove the person/situation from our lives? (*Answer: YES*)
- So, now what? You have an honest analysis of what is going on with the other people in your life and how they impact you. You can see how these things would affect how happy and healthy you are. So... Now what? (*This question is designed to get youth to begin to brainstorm an action plan. Suggestions on guiding the conversation are below*)

Next steps: Invite your child to give some suggestions on what they could do. Ensure that these points are covered as “elements to remember” when setting and maintaining boundaries:

- Sometimes creating or enforcing boundaries takes courage and strength.
- It’s never too late to place a boundary, or strengthen one, or reinstate one.
- Proper boundaries are essential for healthy relationships and protection. You have a right to be safe.
- Using language can be very effective in establishing a boundary (i.e., saying “no,” “don’t call me anymore,” “I don’t want you to do that,” etc.).
- Be firm and consistent when you communicate about your boundaries. You can completely shut down a situation, or leave the door slightly open to revisit later, it’s up to you and the healthiness of the situation.
- It is entirely appropriate and acceptable to communicate expectations, or even create rules for behavior with specific people—try to keep it as simple as possible, though.
- When first creating boundaries, you’ll need to think about boundaries that are necessary for your current interactions, and, boundaries set at the “very beginning” for future interactions.
- To establish boundaries, consider your top 10 most important values or beliefs, and then ensure that your boundaries with others reflect those beliefs. You will likely have different boundaries for various people in your life, depending on the closeness of the relationship.
- Reflecting on what boundaries you have or would like to have NOW makes it easier to maintain them when you enter the event / situation that feels confusing.
- Even though it’s the responsibility of adults to keep minors safe, you may need to place a boundary in any friendship that you have with an adult.
- You have a right to be respected—you are worthy of respect!

Concluding thoughts. It’s important your child to know the following: You don’t have to defend yourself when you place a boundary, and if someone has a problem with your boundary—it is not your problem, it’s theirs. If the individual can’t accept your boundary or constantly crosses it, you need to report them to another safe adult in your life and evaluate if this person is a good fit in your life.

Activity #4 Netsmartz Online Safety: NST Profile Penalty

Background: This short 3-minute video is shared with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and can be played for children as part of an activity. It is designed to open a simple discussion with youth about safety. Youth learn to be safe online and offline, and that they have a right to be safe.

Description: Watch the video to determine how to strengthen your online boundaries. Everything on your profile represents who you are. What does yours say about you?

Click here for the link: <https://www.netsmartz.org/nsteens/profilepenalty>

You are worthy—Own your life!

Instructions: Read each statement below and see if there is any person or situation in your life that might be similar. The *this* person in the statements below could refer to one particular person in your life, or each example could represent different people. Respond honestly with your perspective by circling a response.

Scenario	Circle 1 of the 3 responses
1. Sometimes I feel like there's constant drama and difficulty in my relationship with *this* person, and that I have to walk on eggshells.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
2. Trying to make decisions on my own without *this* person's input is really tough.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
3. It's just easier to let *this* person have their way than to stand up for what I want.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
4. I have a really hard time saying "no" to *this* person.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
5. Sometimes I'm afraid to say "no" to *this* person.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
6. My family and/or friends feel like *this* person tries to isolate me from everyone else.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
7. I have to be available by text, email or social media at all times for *this* person, or else he/she gets really upset.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
8. I constantly feel guilty around *this* person.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
9. It's always my fault with *this* person.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
10. I constantly feel anxious around *this* person, and nervous about how they're going to react.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
11. I feel like I have to be loyal to *this* person, and obedient to do what they say, no matter what.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life
12. Sometimes it's exhausting trying to please *this* person.	Yes Possibly Not applicable to anyone in my life