

Lesson 1
Boundaries
(We decide where the “fence” goes!)



Contents

1. Feelings
2. Relationships
3. What are boundaries?
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6. Maintaining our boundaries

- We have a relationship with everyone else in the world...only they are not all the same!
- We all need to learn the right way to live among others in a way that keeps both us and them safe.
- Boundaries come into play in so many areas of our lives: health, safety, and being citizens in our communities.

Recognizing how we do and do not want to be treated is the first step in advocating for ourselves and becoming independent. In any community, it is important that we all know what is ok to do and say to others and what is not - paying attention to boundaries is a great way to make sure that everyone's personal space is respected. It is also the best way to protect ourselves and others from harm,

This unit will explore the concept of personal boundaries and how we should interact with others in safe, civic-minded ways.



“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest”
– Benjamin Franklin

When our students and children are beside us, we can keep them relatively safe.

We look out for who comes in and out of our space.

We can monitor behavior.

We can teach as we go along.

But the more they learn and grow, the more unfettered our students invariably become (and - hooray! - that is the goal). Therefore, we need to ensure that before they venture out, whether for just a few hours or to live independently, they have the knowledge and ability to keep themselves safe from personal victimization. We must also ensure that they understand how not to mistakenly commit personal safety violations against others.

Our Personal Safety Curriculum teaches students basic concepts to keep themselves and others protected from harm **without** delving into topics of sexuality.

Because instilling and bolstering general safety concepts will pervade all areas of their lives.

Boundaries are boundaries, whatever the situation.

Consent is consent, whatever the activity.

We will continue to repeat and reinforce these principles throughout the curriculum so that students will always know that they can - and should - communicate what they do and do not want, whatever the scenario.

Please continue to role model these concepts as you work with your students!

They are watching us...

This unit is about BOUNDARIES.

Our bodies, our choice!

Topics will include:

Recognizing different kinds of relationships

What is *appropriate* and *inappropriate* behavior

Figuring out personal boundaries

Communicating our boundaries and heeding others'

You will need:

- Pen or pencil
- Scissors
- Clear masking tape
- Dry erase marker
- Worksheets 1-20f

Learning objectives for this lesson:

- Understanding the concept of feelings
- Defining personal space
- Recognizing different kinds of relationships
- Understanding and being able to demonstrate appropriate behavior according to relationships
- Recognizing and identifying personal boundaries
- Demonstrating the ability to communicate feelings and boundaries
- Recognizing and respecting other people's boundaries

**You may read this lesson as it is written or use your own words.
And because everyone's abilities are different, you may choose to skip some worksheets.**

Section 1: Feelings ★

We have all heard the word “feelings.” Many of us spent our childhoods singing along to a song about them (feel free to pop in your 8-track cassette now and give it a listen.) But what are *feelings*?

FEELINGS are the way your body and your mind react to a person, thing, or situation.

So, in a way, feelings give us information about the world around us. The way we feel about something lets us know if it is good or bad for us, if it is something we want in our lives or not, and whether or not we need to protect ourselves from it.

Let's say we come home one day and smell freshly baked cookies cooling in the kitchen:

If we are hungry and have been dreaming of eating something sweet, finding those cookies will make us feel **HAPPY**.

If we learn that the cookies are for someone else and we are not allowed to have one, we will probably feel **SAD**.

If our little brother takes the last one, we may feel **ANGRY**.

If we realize the chocolate chips are actually cherries, we may feel **SURPRISED**.

If we reach for one and find a spider under it, we might feel **SCARED**, or **AFRAID**.

And a moment after finding the spider (and, you know, screaming!) we will most likely feel **DISGUST**. (Like, EW!)



Take out **WORKSHEET 1, "My Feelings."** Review the different feelings and how each make you feel. Discuss times when you felt these feelings - how did they affect you? Tape this up on the wall or the fridge to review!

All of these feelings let us know a) if we want to eat the cookies, b) if they are safe to eat (again, the spider...), and c) if our little brother is being a stinker.

They also let us know what we should *do*.

If the cookies make us feel **HAPPY**, we may decide to eat one! That feeling lets us know what will bring us joy.

If not being allowed to have one makes us feel **SAD**, we may decide to bake more or have a banana, instead. Feeling sad about missing out on a cookie may be a sign that we are hungry and need to eat.

If our little brother laughing at us makes us feel **ANGRY**, it may make us want to explain to him that teasing bothers us. Feeling angry lets us know that something is not ok and needs to be fixed.

If we are **SURPRISED** that the chocolate is actually cherry, perhaps we should take more time to look at things before deciding what we think they are.

If the spider - or anything, really - makes us feel **AFRAID**, we will want to protect ourselves! Feeling fear helps us recognize what may put us in danger.

And feeling **DISGUSTED** will tell us not to eat the cookie! Being "grossed out" by something helps us understand when something is dirty or not good for us.

Feelings help us understand our world and how we might want to behave within it!

We mentioned before that our bodies also react to how we feel. For instance, when we are happy, we may feel warm and tingly. When we are angry, our heart might beat faster and our face gets hot. When we are disgusted, our stomach may feel wobbly. And when we are sad, we often lower our eyes and feel heavy in the chest, that big, broad space between your shoulders.

So, how can we tell how someone else is feeling?

If they don't tell us with their words, we can tell by looking at their *body language*!

BODY LANGUAGE is how we let others know how we feel without using words, but with facial expressions and body movements or gestures.

Take out **WORKSHEETS 2** and **3**, “**Reading Body Language.**”

Look at the pictures and notice what their faces and bodies are doing to let us know how they feel. How can you tell what they are feeling? Do they look like they have good feelings (ones they enjoy) or bad ones (ones that don't feel very good).



BONUS: Stand in front of the mirror and practice your body language. Try to look **HAPPY, SAD, ANGRY, SURPRISED, AFRAID,** and **DISGUSTED.** Consider times you've felt these things - you may find your body language changes just by thinking about it!

Take out **WORKSHEET 4**, “**What is This Feeling?**” Now it's time to test what you've learned!

Look at the pictures and decide if each is a good feeling or a bad feeling, based on their body language.



BONUS: Choose the actual feeling from the list at the bottom. There could be more than one right answer for each!



Stand in front of each other and take turns communicating feelings with your body language. See if you can guess what each other is feeling. You can also add gestures and facial expressions that we haven't listed yet!

Just like in the example of the cookie, we often feel things after something else happens (we got angry *because* our little brother teased us; we felt afraid *because* we saw a spider).

It is important to understand that things outside of us can cause feelings inside of us. This will not only help us recognize why we feel the way we do, but can help us choose behaviors that will not make others feel bad or unsafe!

Different experiences can make different people feel, well, different. If someone had a stomachache, smelling freshly baked cookies may have made them feel angry or sad or disgusted, not happy. If someone loved spiders, finding one under a cookie may have made them feel excited! That's why we have to ask someone before we do something, because we don't know how it will make them feel! Let's face it, some people love, say, being tickled, but others hate that feeling. Some people love being scared (haunted house, anyone?) and others avoid it whenever they can!



Take out **WORKSHEETS 5** and **6**, “That Makes Me Feel...” Look at the experiences and circle how each would make YOU feel. (If it is other than the feelings we suggested, fill in your own!) Play with another person and see if they would feel the same way in the same situation. Discuss why each experience would make you feel the way you think it would! **BONUS:** Practice body language that would show others how each experience made you feel!



Now that we’ve learned about feelings, what causes them, and how to express them (yes, words and body language!), let’s put them all together! Think of experiences (getting invited to a party, losing your pencil, meeting a new person, etc.) and show each other how you would feel about each using body language. If you prefer to use words, practice using them to express yourself, too! See if you can figure out what the other person feels.

Then discuss why you each responded the way you did. Then congratulate yourselves on terrific communication!

As we’ve said, how we each feel about things is very *personal*.

PERSONAL means belonging to a single person. When something is personal, it means that it is about just one person, not everyone. The way you feel about your dog or your favorite song is personal to you! (Someone else might not like dogs or doesn’t listen to music!) Everyone you meet has personal tastes, likes, dislikes, and opinions. So there is no right or wrong, just what’s right or wrong for each person.

Something else that is different for everyone and unique to each person is their *personal space*.

PERSONAL SPACE is the amount of room someone likes to have between themselves and someone or something else.

Some people need very little personal space: they sit right next to us (maybe even with our arms or legs touching each other’s!), they rumple our hair, they stand very close when they speak to us.

Other people need more personal space: they don’t want to touch someone else, they prefer not to be touched, they like a good distance when talking to others.

And because it is personal (about just one person), there is no right or wrong for everyone, just what’s right for each individual!

How do we find out how much personal space someone wants?



It is always great when someone just tells us what they need (guessing can be difficult!), but people don't always *speak up* (we'll talk a lot about this later). One great way to find out their needs is to simply ask! You can ask:

"Do you mind if I sit here?"

"Am I sitting too close to you?"

"Is it okay if I share this bench?"

If you are non-speaking (do not speak), you can practice asking with body language! Approach someone and raise your eyebrows, smile, nod, and point to the empty chair beside them. Most people will understand that you are asking to sit there and they will tell you if it's okay with them.

If you are not comfortable asking a person - either with words or gestures - then always make sure to give people plenty of room when you are near them. If they need that much personal space, you will be doing the right thing! If they don't need that much, they may come a little closer.

And this is where "speaking up" (again, with words or gestures) is important: because we want others to respect (that is, listen to and obey) our personal space needs, too!

If someone asks if they can sit with you, you can always say:

"Sure!"

"Ok, but I just need a little room around me."

"I'd like to sit alone, but thank you for asking!"

You can also give a thumbs-up or shake your head "no." (You don't need to use words to speak up!) It may feel difficult at first, but the more you do it, the easier it gets!



Take turns approaching each other and asking if you can sit with them. The other person will either tell you how much personal space they need or you will have to ask! Practice giving different answers in different ways. Once sitting, try coming a little too close to the other person - they will have to speak up and let you know that they need a little more space.

BONUS: Practice responding politely!

(Try saying, "I'm sorry, I'll move over" or, once you've moved, "Is this ok now?") Practice makes it easier!

Remember: everybody has the right to say what they need.

Section 2: Relationships

We know that there are so many people in the world around us, but did you know that we are all connected to them in a certain way? These are our different *relationships*.

RELATIONSHIPS are bonds, usually with other people; it's not just the way you feel and behave toward others, but the way they feel and behave toward you.

Think of a character on your favorite TV show: does that character have friends? ...Family? ...People they work with? ...Are there people in the background of a scene who this character never speaks to?

When you watch your TV show, you can see all the different relationships the characters have and how they behave with others!



Take out **WORKSHEET 7, "Relationships."** Look at the different types of relationships. Can you name some people in your world from each category?

As we see on TV - and in our lives! - we behave differently with people depending on the relationship.

FAMILY is a group of people closely related by blood or marriage. People in a family share relatives with us or have married our relative. Some family members - like parents, brothers, and sisters - often live together, but others - like cousins, aunts, uncles, and even grandparents - might live in their own homes. We often spend holidays together and see each other at weddings and family events.

FRIENDSHIP is a state of affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between people. It is about enjoying someone's company and trusting them. We spend time laughing with friends, sharing our feelings, and listening to what they have to say. We enjoy spending time together.

ACQUAINTANCES are people we sort of know but who are not close friends. We recognize them when we see them, maybe they are in our class or have the same friends, but we don't know that much about them or spend private time together. These are people with whom we might be friend-ly, but are not quite friends.

HELPERS are the group of people who work for an organization or business and are paid to provide certain care and services for us. They may know a lot about us, but we usually don't know much about their lives. These relationships are often friendly but are not actual friendships because these people are paid to provide us with different services, like keeping us healthy and safe.

STRANGERS are people we have never met or spoken to. We may never have even seen them before. Even though it is grouped as a type of relationships, there is no *actual* relationship with them.



Can we have more than one kind of relationship with the same person? Yes!

We can hang out and be friends with our brother. FRIEND and FAMILY

Our cousin can also be our dentist. FAMILY and HELPER

We can have an aunt we have never met. FAMILY and STRANGER

We might even trust our best friend so much that we consider them family. And that's great!

But just because we have a relationship with someone doesn't mean we can behave any way we want with them. How we behave isn't just about what feels comfortable, it is about what's *appropriate*.

APPROPRIATE means "suitable or proper; what is acceptable or ok."

Ask yourself:

Would I rumple my teacher's hair? That would not be *appropriate* - they would not like that.

Would I want a stranger to kiss me? That would not be *appropriate* - that could even be dangerous.

(We should not kiss a stranger for the same reason!)

And how do you say goodnight to your parent? Many ways might be *appropriate* - you might kiss

them, hug them, or even salute! Your relationship with your parents is much closer and more

comfortable than with, say, your teacher, so you have more options for how to behave with them.

Take out **WORKSHEET 8, "How Do I Greet...?"** Look at all the different people on the worksheet then choose an appropriate way to say "hello" to each of them from the menu at the bottom. There is more than one appropriate way to greet each, so pick all that work for you!



BONUS: Discuss new ways that are and aren't appropriate to say to people in different relationships with you. ("Hi, little mama!" may be appropriate to say to your niece, but not to your doctor!)

What you *don't* say or do can also be appropriate or inappropriate!

If a friend, family member, acquaintance or helper says "hello" to you, it is **appropriate** to say "hi" or "hello," smile, or wave back. It is **inappropriate** to say or do nothing.

So, make sure to return the greeting of someone you know!

However, it is **inappropriate** to say "hello" to a stranger.

It is also always **inappropriate** speak to, touch (even a high-five), or go somewhere with a stranger!

(If you are not sure if you know them, best to stay away from them.)



Take out **WORKSHEET 9, "What is Appropriate in Different Relationships?"**

Underline the things that would be appropriate in each relationship. Some of the options are always the rule; some of the options depend on what makes you and the person in your relationship comfortable! Discuss why you chose each answer!



Section 3: What are boundaries? ★

Our personal feelings are part of what make us who we are.

Understanding those feelings - what makes us comfortable and uncomfortable, what we want and what we don't - is an important way of being kind to ourselves. Your feelings are important!

We just learned about appropriate behavior. But, just because behavior is appropriate does not mean we always like it. Have you ever been told to kiss an aunt or uncle when you didn't want to? Or, has a friend ever sat a little too close when you felt you needed more space?

Those feelings of wanting more space, wanting to decide who touches our body and where, and wanting these feelings to be respected are all examples of our *boundaries*.

BOUNDARIES are limits, almost like a fence or a bubble that no one else can see but that you can feel. That fence might be around part of your body or it might be around your entire body, wanting to keep everyone out so they can't touch you at all. And sometimes the boundary isn't around a body part, but about a behavior; maybe you don't mind someone shaking your hand, but you don't want someone kissing your hand. These are your personal boundaries and only you know where they are!

Remember: We are allowed to have boundaries with anyone, in any relationship, even if it is our closest family member, best friend, even our doctor. Our body lets us know when something feels wrong or uncomfortable - trust that feeling. We are allowed to have boundaries!

We are going to spend a lot of time talking about boundaries in upcoming lessons. That is because setting and speaking up about our boundaries is one of the most important things we can do in our life. (So is listening to and being considerate of others' boundaries!) It helps us create relationships, feel in control of our body, and remain safe around others. Later, we will learn how to communicate our personal boundaries, but for now let's just get comfortable understanding them!

How do we know what our boundaries are?

To figure out your boundaries, think about behaviors others have with you and which ones make you happy or unhappy, comfortable or uncomfortable.

For **PHYSICAL** boundaries:

Think about your *personal space*.

Remember, personal space is the distance that's comfortable from another person when talking or being next to them. You know what makes you comfortable, so if somebody gets too close, feel free to (politely) tell them about your physical boundary!

For EMOTIONAL boundaries:

Think about how much you can listen to and support someone before you become overwhelmed.

For FINANCIAL boundaries:

Keep track of how much money you spend on other people, then work with a trusted adult to figure out the limit you want to set. We cannot give all of our money away, so we have to set boundaries.

For TIME boundaries:

People do not always realize when they are asking too much of us, and they may not notice when we need to rest, spend time alone, and have privacy (more about privacy in Lesson 2!) in a room, by ourselves. Set a limit with the person who needs you and stick to it: set a timer or take note of the time, then alert them when you have to go.

To make sure you are taking care of yourself, make a plan beforehand so it is not awkward later!

Setting boundaries with others is how we teach people how we want them to treat us.

Our boundaries may change depending on the relationship we have with the other person.

You may be ok with your hairdresser touching your hair, but you don't like your friend doing that.

You may be ok with your therapist asking you to tell them your secret feelings, but you don't like your caregiver asking you.

Your boundaries are yours, and there is no right or wrong - just what's right or wrong for you!



Take out **WORKSHEET 10, "Figuring out Our Boundaries!"**

Read through all the ways we can figure out our boundaries.

Pay attention to the way your body feels and to your emotions, ask yourself the important questions listed on the worksheet, think about things you care about, and talk with friends and family about their boundaries! The more aware of our feelings we are, the better we can figure out what boundaries to set.

Let's get a little more practice... (Remember, *repetition helps us remember things!*)



Take out **WORKSHEETS 11a, 11b, and 11c "Putting Boundaries in Their Place!"**

Cut out the words on page 11a. Then place those words that describe your boundaries on the grassy area behind the fence on page 11b. Place those words that do NOT describe your boundaries on the white area outside the fence. Discuss why each is or isn't a boundary. How does each of these things make you feel? List more boundaries on 11c and place them, too!



Nobody can tell you what your boundaries are. Not your doctor, not your caregiver, only yourself! So just because we suggested some possible boundaries doesn't mean we mentioned all of yours! Take this moment to fill out the worksheet about the boundaries only you know about!



Take out **WORKSHEET 12, "Even More Boundaries!"**

List the boundaries that matter the most to you.

Hang this list on your wall or refrigerator to remind you to speak up about your boundaries!

So, why is having boundaries so important?

To Keep You Safe

We tell others what is ok to do to us and what is not ok to do to us so we can feel safe around them. When we let them know how to treat us, we can make sure that we won't have to experience a touch, a sound, or a behavior that makes us unhappy or uncomfortable. Practice telling one different person you know about your boundaries every day!

To Keep Others Safe

It is just as important that other people do not experience touch, sound, or behavior that makes them unhappy or uncomfortable. While we cannot always control how others react to hearing about boundaries (yes, sometimes people don't listen or they forget and need to be reminded!), we can always control how we respond! We should always do our best to respect other people's boundaries when we learn what they are, and to ask for them if they haven't told us!

To Be a Good Citizen

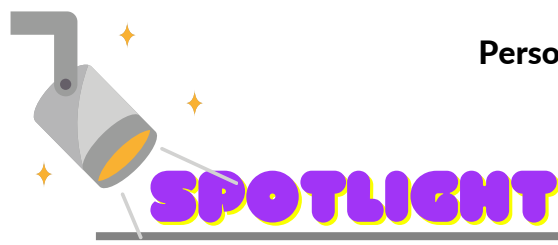
A **CITIZEN** is someone who lives among other people.

To be a good citizen, we follow the law (the rules of where we live and work), behave appropriately (remember that word? It means "suitable or proper; what is acceptable or ok"), and keep ourselves and others safe.

Asking for and honoring (or respecting) other people's boundaries is a great way to be a good citizen!

Because YOU MATTER

Figuring out and setting boundaries is a great way to get clear about who you are, what matters to you, and the respectful treatment you deserve. You can celebrate yourself (and how great you are!) by making sure other people respect how you feel. It also helps create greater independence (being able to rely on yourself - not others - for what you need), as you gain confidence in knowing you can keep yourself safe in those moments you are out in the world on your own!



Senado Federal

Judith Heumann was a disability-rights advocate who spent her life working to increase accessibility and opportunity for the entire community. From her wheelchair, she “pushed the boundaries” of society (changing what was unfair!) and founded the World Institute on Disability (WID), one of the original organizations for global disability rights that was founded and piloted by people with disabilities. Judith proved that having a disability never has to keep us down!

Section 4: Boundaries in different relationships ★

You may feel like you have to do certain things or you are not allowed to do certain things with someone else, depending on your relationship with them. But this is only sometimes true. Most of the time, what is appropriate has more to do with your boundaries and the boundaries of the other person, rather than the type of relationship you have.

However, there are some exceptions.

Sometimes, things are always appropriate or inappropriate according to the type of relationship. Let’s look at some myths (things that are not true) and truths (things that are true!) about rules about different relationships.

MYTH:

You have to kiss or hug a family member when you say “hello” or “goodbye.”

TRUTH:

The truth is, our boundaries are important even with family members. Sometimes we don’t want to kiss our aunt hello, or we don’t want a big hug goodbye from our cousin. There is a way to assert our boundaries without upsetting anyone or hurting their feelings. The approach: suggest something else!

If your aunt comes in with her lips puckered and ready to smooch, try saying, “I’m not comfortable with a kiss right now. Can we high-five?” If your cousin runs up to you with their arms stretched out for a hug, suggest, “Hey, how about we make up a secret handshake instead?” If you are honest and polite, most people will understand without getting offended. Try to get your caregiver on board beforehand so they can support you!

**MYTH:**

We have to listen to all of our best friend's problems.

TRUTH:

Remember how we talked about emotional boundaries? This is a perfect example. Just because we love and want to help our friends doesn't mean we have to take on all of their feelings. Listening is wonderful... until it becomes overwhelming. A good way to avoid overload is by setting a time boundary. Tell yourself that you will dedicate 10 or 15 minutes to listening to their stories and helping them figure out what to do. After that time is up (and they don't even have to know you were timing it!), try bringing up something else. Say, "Hey, let's cheer you up. Want to go get some ice cream?" or "On a lighter note, how's baseball going?" Unless they are dealing with something incredibly upsetting, they will probably appreciate a distraction!

MYTH:

If someone wants to sit alone or farther away from you, it means they don't like you.

TRUTH:

Everybody has boundaries. And we are all allowed to have them. So - just like you - if someone wants some time or space to themselves, it only means that, well, they want time or space to themselves! If someone asserts this boundary, you can simply say, "Ok" or "I understand," and maybe suggest something else, like, "Would you feel comfortable hanging out later?" Even if they do not want to, at least you can feel proud that you were respectful. And that feels good!

MYTH:

It is inappropriate to kiss a family member on the lips.

TRUTH:

A quick kiss on the lips with family is perfectly appropriate, as long as both people - the kisser and the "kissee" - are both comfortable with it. The same goes for good friends. Just ask before you ever kiss someone (and wait for a "yes!"), and make sure that you let the other person know they can kiss you (if you are ok with it!). With acquaintances, though, you probably won't want to kiss them like that (you barely know them!). It is never appropriate to kiss a helper, and you should never even *talk* to strangers - so, no kissing! But with family and friends, just make sure that you *let* each other know you want to do it before you do.

Which brings us to our next definition: *communication*.

COMMUNICATION is letting others know your thoughts and feelings.

Section 5: Communicating boundaries

It is important to be honest when we talk about our boundaries and to stay true to them. Others may not like our boundaries, but they are *ours* and we have the right to assert them!

Communicating about boundaries is the only way to make sure others honor them. That includes telling others what our boundaries are and listening when they tell us theirs.

There are two types of communication:

VERBAL COMMUNICATION uses words to share information - this includes talking, typing, writing, and texting.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION does not use words. Instead, it relies on facial expressions and body gestures to let others know what we think and feel.



Take out **WORKSHEET 13, “Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication.”**

Teacher (or student!) should say or act out each word/phrase, then the student will decide if each is an example of verbal or non-verbal communication. If it is verbal, they should yell out or write, “verbal!”

If non-verbal, they should wave their arms in the air (a form of non-verbal communication!). Discuss your responses!

BONUS: For the non-verbal words/phrases, guess what the actor is trying to communicate!

Both forms of communication are effective if used properly! Let’s talk about how to do that...

Whether you are using words or not, you want to make sure that you are using the right “voice.” We don’t mean the voice that comes out when you sing (although that’s lovely!), but the way you present yourself when you communicate.

There are three types of “voices” to think about when using VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

AGGRESSIVE VOICE is angry, loud, harsh, bullying, and critical (says mean things). People get upset when we use the aggressive voice with them and they often stop listening!

PASSIVE VOICE is quiet, unsure, lacks eye contact, and is not very direct. People often stop listening with the passive voice, too, because it doesn’t sound like we mean what we are saying.

ASSERTIVE VOICE is what we want to use! When we use this voice, we speak clearly, firmly (loudly enough to be heard, but not yelling), we use good eye contact (try looking between someone’s eyebrows if you don’t like eye contact), and we sound like we mean what we are communicating!

* You don’t have to remember all three of these words - just know what each means!

Take out **WORKSHEET 14, “Types of ‘Voices’ in Verbal Communication.”** Look over the three types of voices and decide why each might be either good or not very effective when trying to communicate.



BONUS: Practice using each of these voices - whether verbally, non-verbally, or both! How do you feel when speaking each way? How do you feel being spoken to each way? (Use those great “feeling” words we learned earlier!)

Using your words in an effective way (in a way that makes sure that people hear and understand what you are saying) is very important. But what words are best to use?

The best words are clear and simple. Be polite, but firm. In short: say what you mean!

We often don’t want to make people feel bad (which means we are nice people) so we sometimes don’t say what we really want to say, but that is not very effective when we are standing up for our boundaries. So definitely be polite, but get your point across - you are worth it!

Take out **WORKSHEET 15, “How to Talk About Boundaries Using Verbal Communication.”** Try using each of these phrases and see which work best for you! Sometimes it feels easier to say what we want and need (“I’d like a little more space, please” or “I need to take a step back”) while you may at other times prefer to say what you *don’t* want (“I don’t like being hugged, thank you,” or “I don’t feel comfortable going in the water”). Take some time with the phrases on the worksheet to figure out how you like to communicate your boundaries. (There is no wrong answer - just what’s right for YOU!) Then look at all the ways you can find out other people’s boundaries. Do you prefer to ask if you can do something or ask *how* they would like you to do it? Tape this up on a wall or hang on the refrigerator to remind you to practice!



Take turns asserting boundaries and accepting them. Use your assertive voice for both - firmly state what your boundary is and clearly communicate that you respect the other person’s! (Try an, “I understand,” “Ok, great!,” or “No problem, I got it.” Remember, *repetition helps us remember things!*)

*Let's
role
play*

When we are expressing ourselves verbally - or when someone is expressing themselves to us verbally - it is important to speak clearly to each other, to listen and hear what we each have to say, and to let each other know that we get it! That's why we practice *active listening*.

ACTIVE LISTENING is listening to what another person says, thinking about what they said, responding to what they said, and remembering what they have said. It means really paying attention!

And when we are talking about or listening to issues regarding boundaries, it is so important that we really hear each other! (That way, we can be sure to respect those boundaries.)

Some ways to practice active listening are:

1. Stop talking. It sounds simple, but you cannot listen if you are talking. So no interrupting!
2. Focus on the other person. The only way to hear what they are saying is to pay attention to their words, what their words mean, and the body language that supports their words. (You can actively listen to non-verbal communication this way, too!)
3. Make eye contact and lean in. Let the other person know you want to hear them.
4. Look pleasant. People feel more comfortable talking when the listener wants to hear them.
5. Put down your phone! Stop daydreaming! Give the other person your total attention.
6. Remember, the other person does not need to use their words or voice to express themselves. Use your active listening skills even when someone is using non-verbal communication (pay attention to their face and body). That way, you will both be communicating effectively.



Take out **WORKSHEET 16, "Active Listening."** Look at the picture and notice how the speaker is using assertive communication and the listener is actively listening! Then look at the animals in the picture and figure out if *they* are actively listening! Why do you think so?

Active listening is not just useful when talking about boundaries, though.

It's great to use any time someone is speaking with you!

Have you ever tried communicating with someone who just wasn't, well, checked in? Maybe they were looking around the room, glancing at their phone, staring into space, or just not responding to what you were saying? It's not a good feeling - it might make you feel sad, angry, frustrated, or alone. So just like we don't enjoy feeling that way, neither do other people!

That's why we make sure to look people in the eye (or between their eyebrows, remember that trick?), nod once in a while as they speak, and let them know you're listening.

It's not just a great way to get information, but it's a real relationship-builder! (Let's turn those acquaintances into friends!)

When using NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION, we don't use words to let others know what we think and feel. But we can use *body language*.

If you approached someone to give them a hug, what would your body language look like?

You'd probably be smiling with arms open wide; it would be a happy stance.

If you approached somebody with arms open wide but they crossed their arms tightly in front of their bodies, frowned, and took a step backwards, what would their body language be telling you?

It would probably tell you that they do not want a hug.

But if they smiled back at you, stepped toward you, and opened their arms wide, their body language would probably indicate that they want to hug you back!

Noticing others' body language is known as "reading body language."

Take out **WORKSHEET 17, "Reading Body Language!"**

Glance over the list of ways we tell each other if how we are feeling with just our bodies!

Why do we need to know these?

Because understanding how others are responding to us (how they are reacting to what we are saying or doing) will let us know if we should continue doing or saying these things to them, if they are interested in knowing us better, or if they are comfortable or uncomfortable with something.

For example: If we ask someone to get coffee with them and they look away, fold their arms, or shrug, they are probably not interested in doing it. But if they smile, look us in the eyes, and nod happily, they probably are!

Take out **WORKSHEET 18, "What Does My Body Language Say?"**

Look at the pictures on the sheet and circle which word or phrase better describes what their body language is telling you!

BONUS: Look in the mirror and practice looking interested, bored, uneasy, curious, and other feelings! How do you express this with your body language?

DOUBLE BONUS: Take turns expressing body language with each other and see if you can guess what the other person is feeling! Why do you think so?





So, when is the right time to talk about boundaries with another person?
(Whether verbally or non-verbally!)

Sometimes we won't be able to tell someone we have a boundary until they have crossed it. A nurse may take us by the arm to lead us to an exam room, not realizing it is a boundary of ours, or a new friend may begin talking about a topic, not knowing that it makes us uncomfortable. In that case, we can kindly let them know that we are not comfortable.

Other times, we will be able to let someone know our boundaries before they cross them. If we find we are going to be spending time with someone - whether spending a day at the beach or doing a school project - we can take a moment to let them know our feelings beforehand. We can smile and say, "I'm excited to hang out with you. I do need to leave in 45 minutes, though," or "Just a heads-up, I won't want to go in the water. But I'll hang out in the sun with you!"

Keep it light and friendly - a smile goes a long way. And you don't have to apologize. You have the right to your boundaries!

Sometimes, it is the person we are with who needs to communicate their boundaries.

If they don't tell you, you can always ask a person about their boundaries (see **WORKSHEET 15** again)! When sitting down for a meal, you might ask if you are sitting too close to them; if you want to tell them a scary story, you can ask if they are ok with that before you begin. It's a great way to find out how they feel and to show you care!

You can also observe their body language!

Notice if a person moves away when you sit or stand near them (they are telling you that they need more space!), if they cover their ears (it may be too loud!), or if they frown or pull their hand away if you touch it (they don't want to be touched). But remember: it is always better to ask first - that way you can make sure not to dishonor their boundaries!



Let's cover all forms of communication!

Let the other person know your boundary either verbally, if you use words - trying out aggressive, passive, and assertive voices - or non-verbally, with body language! How does it feel to do that?

When the other person tells you theirs, try to figure out what they are conveying. Is it easy to figure out? Does asking them about their boundaries make it easier?



{PD-USGov}

Sir Isaac Newton was a brilliant mathematician and scientist who was also the first person to ever have been thought to have Autism spectrum disorder. He created what is known as “Newton’s Laws,” explaining his theories about the universe like force, inertia, and gravity. Did you ever notice that laws only allow things to happen within limits? ...Like boundaries! So, some could say that Isaac Newton helped pave the way for talking about boundaries! (Discuss some laws and their boundaries!)

Someone telling you their boundaries can sometimes feel bad - if they don’t want you to sit near them or tell you they don’t want to get coffee together or join you at lunch, the *rejection* can make you feel like they don’t like you.

REJECTION is saying "no" to an idea or suggestion.

Accepting rejection is difficult. We can start to wonder if we are not good enough (we are!) or fear that we will never find someone who wants to have lunch or sit near us (we will!). But we are all going to hear a “no” at some point in our lives - and we will say “no” to others! - so it is important to know how to do so in the kindest way possible. (And always know that when someone says “no” to you, it’s not because you’re not great, they are just speaking up for their boundaries!)

So, when someone decides not to let you sit with them, not to go to a movie with you, or not to let you toss a water balloon at them, be sure to be kind. Honor (accept) their boundaries as you would want them to honor yours.

Some good responses are, "Thanks for letting me know," "Okay, no problem," or "Got it!" It's not personal, and you haven't done anything wrong.

They just wanted to let you know how they feel and how you can interact while still feeling comfortable.

Accept their decision and don’t keep asking them - one “no” should be enough! And try not to make them feel bad - they certainly don’t want to hurt your feelings!

There will be times when you are the one to tell someone that your boundaries prevent you from doing what they want to do. Be kind then, too - they might feel rejected or embarrassed. Say “no, thanks” or “I’m not comfortable doing that,” and nothing more. You have the right to your boundaries!



Take out **WORKSHEET 19, “The Rejection Files!”** Look at the list of right and wrong things to say and do when you reject another person or they reject you. Hang this worksheet on your wall to remind yourself of how to respond in these situations. And remember, it happens to everyone. Let’s make sure everyone’s boundaries are honored!



Using the suggestions on the worksheet, take turns giving and receiving rejection. Imagine different situations, from easy to what might feel uncomfortable. Concentrate on practicing what you *should* do, rather than what you *shouldn't*. The more you practice, the easier it will get!

Now that we know how to tell others our boundaries, how to find out others’ boundaries, and how best to make sure everyone’s are honored, remember that even if you have already told someone how you feel, sometimes people forget! (You might forget someone else’s, too!) So, just remind someone if you have already told them your boundaries but they touch, make a sound, or behave in a way that doesn’t honor them. Remember, *repetition helps us remember things!*



Take turns reminding someone of your boundaries. Begin with “I just want to remind you...” or “Remember when I mentioned...?”

BONUS: Practice your response to being reminded! Always be polite: “I’m sorry” or “Yes, now I remember” will do!

Keep role playing - before or after work, at the dinner table, or any time you find yourself with a couple of extra minutes. Boundaries are important - whether they are yours or someone else’s - and we want everyone to feel safe that their needs are valued.

Section 6: Maintaining our boundaries ★

As we mentioned, sometimes people will forget the boundaries we set. And, as much as we try to remind them, it doesn’t always work. Here are some ways to make sure that we are respected and feel safe, even with the most forgetful people in our life.

First, figure out your *hard boundaries* and your *soft boundaries*.

HARD BOUNDARIES are the ones that are most important to you, the ones you will not let go.

SOFT BOUNDARIES are less important - you may be willing to compromise those.

When you identify - or figure out - your soft boundaries, try not to worry about those so much. If someone accidentally disrespects them, it's probably not a big deal. (If a soft boundary is people chewing near you, you may just ignore it if it happens.)

But when you identify your hard boundaries, you want to make sure that no one forgets and violates (disrespects) them. That's when you use one of our handy reminders from the role play on page 20! If someone seems to keep "forgetting," you may want to remind them one final time, then decide to spend a little less time together.

Another good way to help others respect our boundaries is by *modeling* boundary respect!

MODELING means demonstrating desired actions so others can replicate them.

In short, behave the way you want others to behave!

In the case of boundaries, this means asking others if it is ok before you touch or sit/stand near them, then respecting their answer. The more you do this for others, the more likely it is that they will then be mindful of *your* boundaries.

Take out **WORKSHEETS 20a-20e, "Boundary Bingo!"**
Practicing asking, telling, and respecting boundaries has never been so fun!

First, hand out dry-erase markers.

Then, print and cut out the dots and boards for however many players there will be (up to 6!).

Next, cover the board with tape and draw an **X** over the center space, "Boundaries!," with a dry-erase marker. After this, print and cut out the dots on the following page. Cover those with tape, as well, so they do not tear.

The Bingomaster who runs the game should mix the dots up in a hat or bowl, then pull one out, reading the words aloud with eye contact and a strong voice or acting out the phrases in "()."

If the phrase appears on your board, draw an **X** over it. (20f is a non-verbal card for non-readers.)

Remember, not all phrases are on every board.

Then follow with the next dot.

The first person to get five across, up-and-down, or diagonal WINS!

The more you practice, the better you get at asking, telling, and respecting boundaries!





These are all great ways to make sure other people's boundaries are respected and to safeguard yours, too.

Although we know that no one should touch us unless they ask and get a "yes" first (this is called *consent*, and we'll learn about it in the next lesson!), there are two kinds of people with whom we do *not* get to assert our boundaries when it comes to touch: people who help us with our daily personal care (bathing, dressing, bathroom, hygiene) and doctors.

People who help us with our daily care often have to touch us - whether it is helping us get our arms into our shirt, brushing our hair, or helping us wash up after using the bathroom - and we need to allow them to do this work. After all, it is their job to keep us clean and healthy!

HOWEVER...

Your caregiver and you can have a conversation with the person who has these duties (and if that person is your caregiver, you can have a talk with them!) about what kinds of touch you do not like. For instance, maybe you don't like someone to brush your hair too hard. In that case, you can tell them that's a boundary and ask them to be more gentle! Or if you don't want them to make comments while they are bathing you or helping you in the bathroom, you can mention that, too.

Because even if someone is helping care for you, you should still have your boundaries respected. And you should respect theirs, too. (In fact, you can ask them if they have any boundaries they would like you to respect!)

If someone does not honor the boundaries you have set with them or if they touch you in a way you do not like, find a trusted adult - someone you can count on, who listens, and who looks after your safety - and tell them. These are some of your most important relationships! (Remember those?)

When at the doctor, you usually have to be touched a lot, too. And sometimes, we really don't like the way it feels (like when we get a shot or the stethoscope is cold!). Unfortunately, we have to let the doctor do their work - it's for our own good. But, like with the other people who take care of us, we are still allowed to let them know our boundaries.

Your trusted adult comes in handy here, too.

Tell them how you feel! They may not be able to keep those needles and stethoscopes away from you, but they can listen and try to make changes so you feel better about it.



You can also make sure that the doctor asks for your *consent* before doing anything (does that word sound familiar? Consent is a “yes, let’s do that!” and we’ll learn about it in the next lesson!).

Before any examination, your doctor should explain:

- why you need the examination
- what parts of your body need to be examined
- how they will touch you for the examination
- if you will need to undress
- what will happen during the examination

Then the doctor should allow you to ask questions.

They should also:

- allow you to undress behind a screen or in a separate dressing area OR turn around or leave the room when you undress or get dressed
- offer a gown, sheet, or some other type of body covering
- keep the body parts they do not need to examine covered
- always wear gloves during an internal examination

You also have the *right* (meaning you are always allowed!) to have a trusted adult stay in the room during your examination if it makes you feel more comfortable.

How do you know if your boundaries are being disrespected?

You’ll feel it!

Our bodies let us know when something doesn’t feel right.

We feel worried or upset.

Our stomachs sometimes feel wobbly.

We may shake.

Most often, we find ourselves thinking about it long after something has happened.

This is called our *instincts*, or our *gut*, and we should always listen to them!

Just like with our feelings (the ones we learned about waaaaaaay back in the beginning of this lesson!), our bodies let us know what we are feeling. So believe yours. And talk to a trusted adult.

End of Lesson One! Great job! 

Glossary

ACTIVE LISTENING is paying attention to what another person says, responding to what they say, thinking about what they say, and remembering what they have said. It is really paying attention!

AGGRESSIVE VOICE is angry, loud, harsh, bullying, and critical (says mean things). People get upset when we use the aggressive voice with them, and they often stop listening!

APPROPRIATE means "suitable or proper; what is acceptable or ok."

ASSERTIVE VOICE is what we want to use! When we use this voice, we speak clearly, firmly (loud enough to be heard, but not yelling), we use good eye contact (try looking between someone's eyebrows if you don't like eye contact), and sounds like we mean it!

BODY LANGUAGE is how we let others know how we feel without using words, but with facial expressions and body movements, or gestures.

BOUNDARIES are limits, almost like a fence or a bubble that no one else can see but that you can feel.

A **CITIZEN** is someone who lives among other people.

COMMUNICATION is letting others know your thoughts and feelings.

FEELINGS are the way your body and your mind react to a person, thing, or situation.

HARD BOUNDARIES are the ones that are most important to you, the ones you will not let go.

MODELING means demonstrating desired actions so others can replicate them. In short, behave the way you want others to behave!

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION does not use words. Instead, it relies on facial expressions and gestures to let others know what we think and feel.

PASSIVE VOICE is quiet, unsure, lacks eye contact, and is not very direct. People often stop listening with the passive voice, too, because it doesn't sound like we mean what we are saying.

PERSONAL means belonging to a single person.



PERSONAL SPACE is the amount of room someone likes to have between themselves and another person.

REJECTION is saying "no" to an idea or suggestion.

RELATIONSHIPS are bonds, usually with other people; it's not just the way you feel and behave toward others, but the way they feel and behave toward you.

SOFT BOUNDARIES are less important - you may be willing to compromise those.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION uses words to share information - this includes talking, typing, and texting.