
Lesson Plan: Ages 14-17 Grades 9-12

Objective: To help teens to set appropriate boundaries in their relationships with both adults and peers. To develop skills for addressing situations where boundaries are crossed.

Opening Prayer: 1 Corinthians 13 (The gift of love)

Knowing How to Distinguish Good/Bad in Relationships (25 minutes)**How do you know when you are in a good relationship?**

- A good relationship is life-giving. The other person encourages you to grow. It does not demand all your time and attention; you are proud to be with the other person in the circles of your family and friends; you maintain your individuality while in a couple relationship; it is respectful; you feel a comfortable sense of belonging.

How do you know when you are in a bad relationship?

- A bad relationship stifles you. It is demanding and possessive. You feel isolated from friends and family and embarrassed by the other person's behavior; you feel trapped and lose a sense of yourself; there is a loss of control over your own choices; it is not respectful of personal boundaries; you feel "disconnected" from yourself, friends and others.

Put young people in groups of two. Ask them to create a scenario of a pair of friends, a couple, or an adult/teen relationship in each of those two categories above (good relationship and a bad relationship). Share their scenarios with the large group as time allows.

Recognizing Boundaries in Peer and Adult Relationships (15 minutes)

Boundaries are the physical and emotional limits a person establishes in his/her relationships. Examples of physical boundaries include the comfortable physical distance we determine when we interact with people, when we allow people to touch, hug or kiss us, the sexual boundaries we set. Different cultures determine different physical boundaries. Some cultures accept greeting of others in physically demonstrative ways-with hugs and kisses, even with those they do not know; others accept only minimal eye contact in meeting someone new. It is important to know the culture you are dealing with for appropriate physical boundaries. Most boundaries reflect our personal preferences or our values. Emotional boundaries include limits we establish on what personal information we disclose to others, and how we respect others' self-esteem and feelings. Emotional boundaries are crossed by manipulative behavior, name calling, sarcasm, ridicule, put-downs. Some people reveal a lot of personal information immediately, while others take longer to get to know. Some people welcome and even expect others to probe into their lives, while others are more "private," choosing to reveal themselves gradually with time and trust.

In good relationships, each individual is respectful of others' boundaries and does not cross them. In bad relationships, boundaries are ignored and people feel uncomfortable and even violated. Sometimes an individual tries to manipulate the other into believing he/she should cross his/her own pre-set boundary. This technique is often used to get others to cross over sexual boundaries.

What are some warning signs that someone is trying to cross your physical or emotional boundaries?

- A person gives you alcohol or drugs.
- A person tries to get you alone or asks you to keep a secret, or threatens if you reveal this.
- A person tries to win you over with gifts, special praise or consideration.
- A person uses conditions to get you to do something you might want. For example, "If you want a good grade, you need to have sex with me."
- A person tries to isolate you from your support system (like friends and family).
- A person is persistent in trying to talk you into what they want, despite your saying "no."

You have a right to have your boundaries respected and a responsibility to respect others. It is important to recognize when a person is trying to cross your boundaries and stop it immediately, even if that person is someone you know.

Refusal and Assertive Skills for Safeguarding Boundaries (20 minutes)

- Give each group these scenarios and ask them to address each. Then choose pairs to role-play each of the three in front of the group.

1) A girl/guy wants to date you. S/he is constantly at your locker, at your lunch table and always around, trying to get your attention and get you to accept their invitation for a date. You are feeling your boundaries are being crossed and need to let this person know.

2) Your girl/boyfriend has been putting you down both in private and in public around friends. S/he makes fun of your mannerisms by accentuating them and laughing; s/he makes negative comments about your looks and tells you that you are lucky you have him/her because no one else would want you. You recognize your emotional boundaries are being violated and you need to address this.

3) An assistant coach you admire seems to favor you over the others. S/he appears when you are alone in the locker area and has “accidentally” touched your breast and buttocks on a few occasions. You don’t want to hurt her/his feelings and you know s/he has control over whether you start on the team or not. But her/his behavior is making you uncomfortable as you recognize that boundaries are being crossed. You need to deal with this.

4) Your employer calls you at home and talks about her/his personal life and gives you gifts. It is well known among the other employees that s/he favors you. It seems s/he is coming on to you, even though you are 15 years younger. One night s/he asks you to work alone with her/him until late and promises to bring you home. This makes you uncomfortable; especially when s/he urges you to tell your parents you are going to a friend’s house and will be home by your 1:00 a.m. curfew! You don’t want to lose your job, but you know you need to address this.

Point out through the role play:

- The need to be assertive and use “I feel,” and “I need,” statements.
- To get away from the person violating their boundaries.
- To tell a trusted adult who will help you determine whether or not to pursue this as harassment or abuse.
- The need to address the issue with someone, even if they are an adult in authority and have power over you.
- Teens may be sexually abused by either men or women.
- Teens are as vulnerable to lures as are children, since offenders know how to use lures so effectively and convincingly.
- To know beforehand clearly what your boundaries are, so you are not in a situation to have to determine them under duress.

Internet and Cell phone Reminders:

What is “Sexting”? Refers to teens that share nude photos via cell phones, other devices, and e-mail. It’s illegal! Sometimes it’s Flirting, Impulsive Behavior, Blackmail, and/or Bribery. IT’S ALWAYS A BAD IDEA. If the picture crosses a State line, the offence becomes a federal felony. If you pass a picture on, you are just as guilty, even if you didn’t know it went across a State line. “Sexting” ruins lives.

Social Etiquette for MySpace, Twitter, Facebook, etc.

- Think about what you post. The net is forever! If you posted it, someone has it and it might come back to trouble you. (College, Job Interview, Relationship, etc.)
- Read between the lines. Maybe someone is searching for information on you.
- Don’t talk about sex with strangers. (A secret is something you tell another friend.)
- Avoid in-person meetings. The only way someone can harm you is if you are both in the same location.

Closing: Send them forth with a simple prayer blessing them with God’s love.

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