

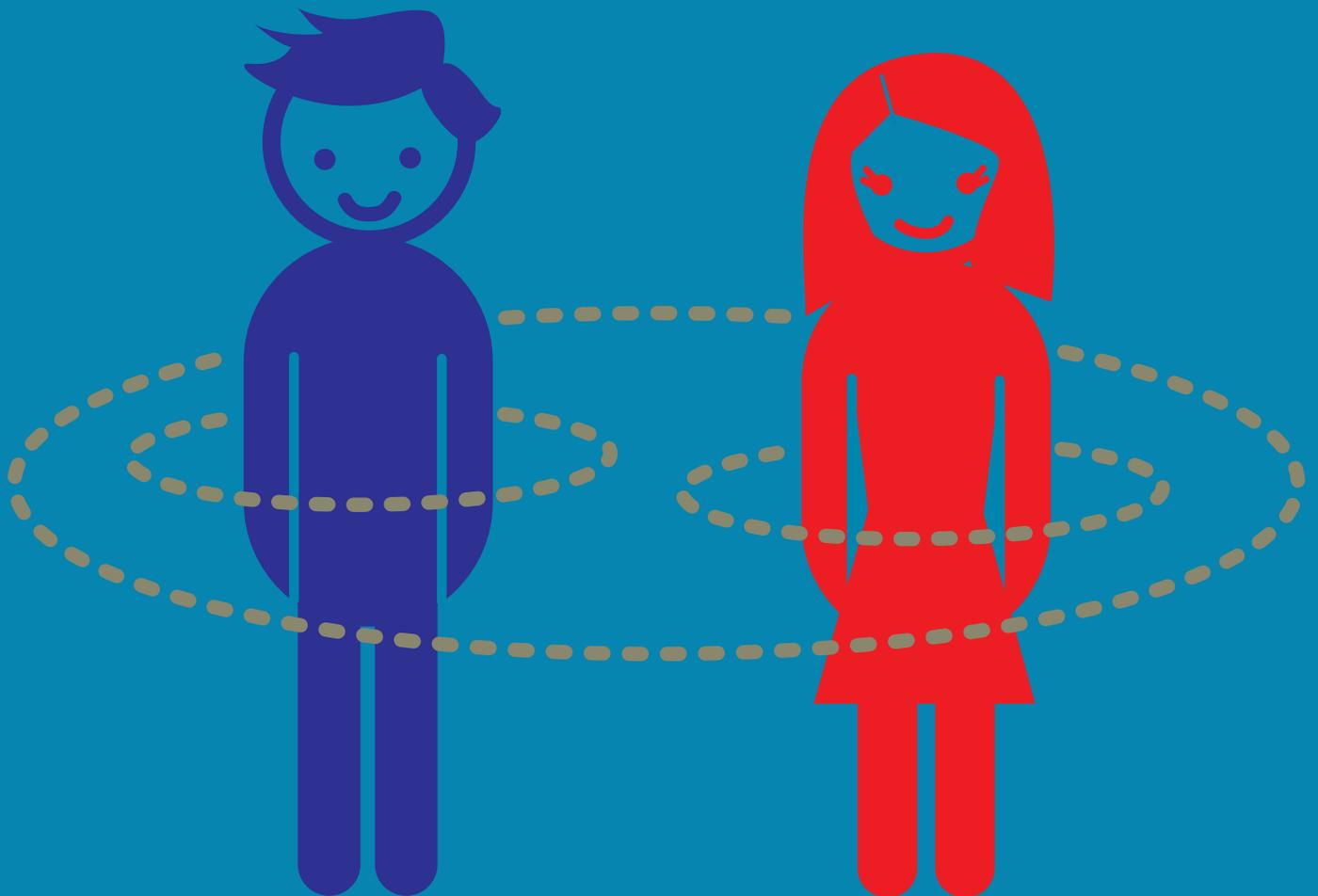


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Lesson:

Teaching Kids Healthy

Boundaries



BACKGROUND

Boundaries are imperative for healthy relationships, and it is important we teach our children how to create healthy boundaries for themselves. **Boundaries** can be defined as the space between you and another person, and the unspoken rules of how you will treat someone and how you expect to be treated. This can be difficult for children and even teens to understand. A literal example can help to illustrate.

A fence around a yard is a physical boundary that allows the owner of the house to keep out things they do not want in and let in what they do want. Personal boundaries are like fences; we have them to protect ourselves, and they include physical, emotional, and psychological boundaries. These boundaries can assist our children to understand the principle of **consent**, which is the individual right they have to agree or not agree to participate in certain behavior.

PREPARATION

- Take some time to assess your own boundaries, keeping in mind our children learn from our own example. Do we have healthy boundaries with others? Do we respect others' boundaries?
- Review the lesson beforehand so the terms and ideas are familiar.
- Have drawing paper and markers/crayons.

OBJECTIVE

- Teach children and teens what boundaries are, how to create healthy personal boundaries, and how to label and define behaviors that make them uncomfortable.
- Help kids to understand the importance of trusting their gut; if a situation does not feel right to them, let them know they should trust their instinct.
- Teach your child what they can do when boundaries are crossed and who they can go to for help.
- Help kids make the connection that boundaries go both ways; how we want to be treated is how we should treat others.

LESSON

Use the following activities to explain what boundaries are and why they are so important to healthy, functional relationships.

ACTIVITY

Explain that personal boundaries are like a fence around a house; the fence keeps the house protected.

Draw a house, or have your child/teen draw the house, that represents themselves, and draw a fence around it. On the outside of the fence, write down words that describe behaviors that make them uncomfortable.

This can be broken down into specific areas:

Physical: This could include **unwanted touch** anywhere on the body, , hitting, biting, hair pulling, or wrestling. Basically, any touch that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Emotional/Psychological: This could include name calling, humiliating treatment, controlling, bullying, yelling, being forced to keep an “unsafe secret,” intense jealousy, belittling, or criticism.

**Older kids can have their own individual sheets and can draw the house themselves and label qualities that describe themselves inside explaining that we create boundaries from knowing ourselves.*

On the inside of the fence, list words that describe how they want to be treated, and how they will treat others. Again, this can be broken down into segments when discussing:

Physical: This could include hugs, kisses on the cheek, or tickling. You can discuss with whom they feel comfortable engaging in these physical activities.

Emotional/Psychological: This could include love, kindness, caring, sharing, respect, honesty, encouragement, or personal freedom.

ACTIVITY

Role play some of the behaviors that have been written. When discussing unwanted behaviors, demonstrate ways they can handle it. Provide examples of what they can do or say and who they can go to for help.

EXAMPLE

You are in school, and a teacher asks you to stay after a class. They tell you they are concerned for you and begin stroking your back, and you feel very uncomfortable. Let's act out what you can do and say. "Thanks Mr. Smith, but my friends are waiting for me." Do not wait for a response, and leave the classroom. Find an adult you feel safe with such as another teacher or counselor, and let them know what happened. Tell your parent(s) when you arrive home.

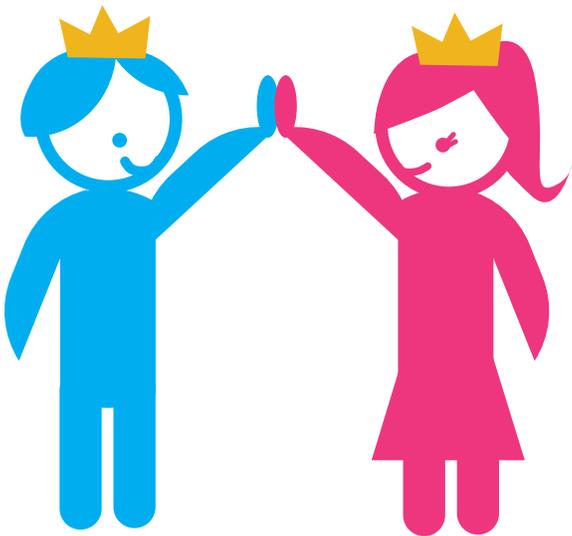
Role play how they will treat others using the examples they provided in the drawing.

EXAMPLE

Your good friend hates to be tickled, but everytime she comes over, your brother tickles her. Let's act out what you can do and say. Have a talk with your brother before she comes over, and let him know it makes her very uncomfortable. If he continues to try and tickle your friend, go to your parent and explain the situation.



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS



- Using the drawing as a reference, ask them what will they do if a person brings one of the behaviors from outside of the fence inside the fence.
- Who will they go to for help?
- What will they say to an adult who touches them in an unwanted way?
- How will they treat others?

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER KIDS

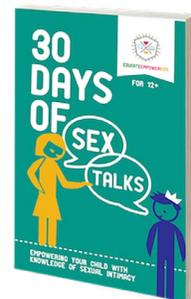
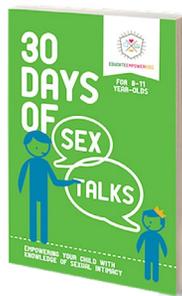
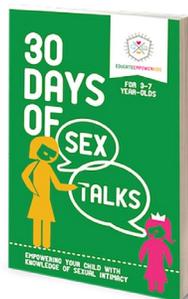
- Who will you go to for help if someone is not respecting your boundaries at home, school, church, or work?
- What will you say to an adult who does not respect your boundaries? What about a friend?
- What will you do if the person apologizes and asks you not to tell anyone?
- Do you understand the principle of consent?
- How can you tell what someone's personal boundaries are regarding personal space and/or touch?
- How will you respect another person's boundaries?

FOLLOW UP

- Keep the conversation going based on the specific issues your child brought up. Use the drawing you made together as a reference.
- Consider a follow-up conversation about affection from relatives. Children should not be coerced into kissing or hugging Aunt Ruth if it makes them uncomfortable. Come up with a family plan of how to respect your child's feelings and still be polite to family members.

RESOURCES

The following books provide age appropriate information and discussion question to address intimacy, healthy relationships, body image, and consent and boundaries. *30 Days of Sex Talks*, Ages 3-7, 8-11, and 12+.



RELATED LESSONS

Talking to Your Kids About Consent (Ages 8-18)

Good Touch/Bad Touch (Ages 3-7)

Predators (Ages 3-7)



GLOSSARY

Boundaries: The space between you and another person; the unspoken rules of you will treat others and how you want to be treated.

Consent: Permission for something to happen or an agreement to do something.

Unwanted Touch: Any touch from another person that makes you feel uncomfortable, violates your personal space, and/or specifically touches private parts without your consent