



Grade Ten Safe Environment Lesson

Objectives: Help teens to set appropriate boundaries in their relationships with both adults and peers. Develop skills for addressing situations where boundaries are crossed.

Opening Prayer: 1 Corinthians 13 (The Gift of Love)

Part I: (25 min.) Knowing How to Distinguish Between Good/Bad Relationships

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 couples 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 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. Share their scenarios with the large group as time allows.



Part II: (15 min.) Recognizing Boundaries in Peer and Adult Relationships

Definition: *Boundaries* are the physical and emotional limits a person establishes in his/her relationships. Most boundaries reflect our personal preferences or our values.

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.

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, and 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 sexual boundaries.



What are some warning signs that someone is trying to cross 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 you 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’ boundaries. 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 and like.

Part III: (20 min.) Refusal and Assertive Skills for Safeguarding Boundaries

Give each group these scenarios, and ask them to address each. Then ask for volunteers to role play each of these.

- 1) A girl/guy wants to date you. She/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 among friends. She/he makes fun of your mannerisms by accentuating them and laughing; she/he makes negative comments about your looks and tells you that you are lucky you have her/him 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. 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 his feelings and you know he has control over whether you start on the team or not. But 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 personal life, and gives you gifts. It is well known among the other employees that she favors you. It seems she is coming on to you, even though you are 15 years younger than she. One night she asks you, and only you, to work alone with her until late and promises to bring you home. This makes you uncomfortable; especially when she urges you to tell your parents you are going to a friend’s house and will be home by your 1:00 AM 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 adult males or females or even an older teen.
- Teens are as vulnerable to lures as are children, since offenders know how to use lures so effectively and convincingly.
- When a teen knows beforehand what his/her boundaries clearly are they are more likely to remain calm, focused, and make healthy decisions if those boundaries are tested by others.



Optional activities:

- After the session or at a journal time, encourage young people to take some quiet time to write down:

My physical boundaries are... My emotional boundaries are...

- Have young people re-write 1 Corinthians 13 in their own way:

Love is ...

Love is not...