

Lesson 3 for Grades 9—12

Boundaries: You Have Rights!

PRINCIPLE

Youth must understand they have a right to be safe, and they are allowed to create boundaries to protect themselves in situations where they feel uncomfortable, or where they could be harmed.

OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, the adult lesson leader reinforces the parent's message about boundaries. After Lesson 3, children should be better able to:

- Identify and define various types of boundaries
- Ensure they can set their own boundaries and communicate them to others
- Honor appropriate boundaries in different types of relationships
- Technology Component: Understand boundaries can apply for Online activities, too

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 Lesson Leaders:

Before beginning this session, the Lesson Leader should read the Teaching Boundary and Safety Guide, as it gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries and how to address them.

Many of the boundary and safety rules for younger children also apply to older youth, though it may be communicated differently. Caring adults will still provide teenagers and “tweens” with expectations and boundaries. Remind them they can always say “no” and are allowed to remove themselves from any situation if they’re uncomfortable. If abuse or boundary violations occur, they need to know that you’ll help to protect them regardless of the circumstances—and that abuse isn’t their fault. The older children become, the more you can outline other types of boundaries.

This age group: Dealing with teenagers—key concept is “searching”

This is the age where all the experiences that began with puberty—the physical changes and the developing emotions—accelerate rapidly as the teenager matures into a young adult. The self-consciousness deepens and matures. The world of “children” is now renounced. Teens believe in their immortality and may tend to be reckless in their behavior—in person and online. Although it would appear that they reject authority while defining their own independence, in reality, they rely on the strength and support they find in parents and other influential adults. Feeling supported and understood is important for this age group, as is upholding boundaries while the reasoning portions of their brains continue to develop. Teens have a great deal of personal freedom. This freedom also puts them at risk in various ways. Parents and guardians expect teens to take care of themselves and to ask for the help that they need. Caring adults must know that children’s online behavior and boundaries may need to be fortified.

ACTIVITY OPTION #7: You are worthy—Own your life!

Activity: This activity involves reviewing the worksheet and selecting multiple choice answers about our relationships to determine if there are any boundary issues that need to be addressed. Then, a discussion will ensue to give tips on how to strengthen or place boundaries.

Note: The activity handout sheet is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

Directions: Write the different types of boundary violations that can occur in a place where everyone can see—here are examples of the most common types: boundaries can be personal, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, involving language, involving safety, involving trust, etc. Then begin the discussion and hand out the lesson worksheet.

SUPPLIES

Pre-printed lesson handouts
Writing utensil

Discussion: **Explain the following to youth:** 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.

Pass out the lesson worksheet, and ask the students to fill it out with answers that are as honest as possible. Explain that there are 3 possible answers that they can circle, give them 10 minutes to complete, and then ask for their full attention:

- **Yes:** which means that the scenario is actually occurring in their life, or they think it is
- **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.
- **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.

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

- With a show of hands, how many of you said "yes" to at least one of these examples?
- With: with a show of hands, how many said "possibly" to at least one of these examples?
- 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)*

Note: The Lesson Leader should communicate that no one has to share if they don't feel comfortable.

Next steps: Invite the youth 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 for youth to know the following: You don’t have to defend yourself when you place a boundary, and if someone has a problem—it is not your problem, it’s theirs. If the individual can’t accept your boundary or constantly pushes on it, you may need to evaluate if this person is a good fit in your life anymore.

ACTIVITY OPTION #8: Netsmartz Online Safety: Your Photo Fate

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. Once you send a photo online, there’s no way to control it. It’s out of your hands.

Click here for the link: <https://www.netsmartz.org/reallifestories/yourphotofate>

End the lesson with a prayer

The Lesson Leader may invite the youth to create their own prayer, he / she may lead a prayer, or may use the suggested prayer below.

*Dear God,
Sometimes things happen to me that are confusing or frightening. When I feel stuck, alone or don’t know where to turn, help me remember that I have many adults who care about me and want the best for me. Help me remember to uphold my boundaries so I can protect myself from anyone who might want to hurt me—even if it is someone I like, and help me to protect my friends as well by delivering safety information to people who can help. Thank you for my parents or loved ones who are protecting me. Remind me of your love for me and that you are always with me.*

Saint Maria Goretti, Pray for us! Amen

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ACTIVITY OPTION #7: 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, and return to the lesson for a discussion with the Lesson Leader after you're done.

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

ACTIVITY OPTION #5: You Are Worthy—Own Your Life!

12. Sometimes it's exhausting trying to please *this* person.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
13. I'll do anything not to let *this* person down.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
14. I'm constantly worried about what this person is going to post about me on the Internet.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
15. *This* person makes me feel like I'm responsible for his/her thoughts, actions and feelings.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
16. I feel like I don't have any control in my relationship with *this* person.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
17. I'm not allowed to wear certain things, go where I want to go or do what I like to do when I'm with *this* person.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
18. Sometimes I feel upset and suffocated when around *this* person.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
19. I'm often pressured to do things I don't want to do with *this* person.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life
20. My friends and family say that I'm very different around *this* person, and not in a good way.	Yes / Possibly / Not applicable to anyone in my life