



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of **FORT WORTH**

VOLUNTEER WORKBOOK
for ages 11 to 13

A Guide to talking with your
child about abuse

What Are Boundaries?

A boundary is a limit or space between you and the other person; a clear place where you begin, and the other person ends. The purpose of setting a healthy boundary is, of course, to protect and take good care of you.

Boundaries can be physical or emotional, and they can range from being loose to rigid, with healthy boundaries often falling somewhere in between.

What Is Boundary-Setting? Why Is It Important?

Setting personal boundaries involves taking specific actions to change your relationship with people in your life. Setting boundaries is not about blaming others. It's about setting limits and it is imperative to learn during adolescence because it is a time of identity formation.

Learning how to set and maintain boundaries is an important part of growing up. It is also a key to developing relationships that are supportive, caring, and respectful, and personal boundaries often change as people grow and mature.

There are many barriers to boundary-setting—fear of rejection, guilt, and fear of confrontation. Healthy boundaries allow teens to feel respected, valued, and empowered to build positive relationships in their lives.

The first step to setting boundaries is to be able to notice when people around you are behaving in ways that are unacceptable, i.e., you might feel that someone is uncaring, or you feel put down or manipulated by them.

Situations for discussion:

- An overweight teen feels ashamed when friends talk about obese people and the clothes they wear. How can teens communicate to friends that these discussions are hurtful? How can a teen ask friends to modify their discussions?
- A teen feels frustrated when a friend makes all of the decisions and assumes that the teen will always do what the friend wants. The teen may fear that speaking up will destroy their friendship. How can the teen's feelings be communicated to the friend?

Answering these kinds of questions are necessary when someone feels discomfort, resentment, anxiety, guilt, fear, shame, or stress in a relationship.

When you feel you are not making your own decisions, asking for what you need, feeling criticized, accepting responsibility for other's feelings, and unable to say "no", it is time to reflect on how to communicate your discomfort in ways that will be heard and responded to.

In some situations, friendships may not be worth saving. It is up to each person to decide.

What Are Healthy Boundaries?

Healthy boundaries are a crucial component of self-care. That's because in our relationships, poor boundaries can lead to resentment, anger, and/or burnout.

Healthy boundaries can serve to establish one's identity. They can help people indicate what they will and will not hold themselves responsible for.

Setting healthy boundaries can have many benefits, including helping people make decisions based on what is best for them, not just the people around them. This autonomy is an important part of self-care, which is an important part of leading a mentally healthy life.

While boundaries are often psychological or emotional, boundaries can also be physical, i.e., declining physical contact from a friend is setting an important boundary, one that's just as crucial as setting an emotional boundary; or asking a friend not to make unreasonable demands on your time or emotions.

Possible consequences of not setting healthy boundaries can cause mental distress, that is to say, a lack of healthy boundaries can negatively affect all aspects of someone's life.

There are three basic kinds of boundaries

Rigid	Clear	Fuzzy
These are strict boundaries and do not change. You might not know why these rules are rules . . . but you do know that you have to follow them!	You understand these rules. They are clear boundaries can change over time. Some things that were “out of bounds” when you were younger might be okay now	These are “rules” that aren’t really rules at all. A fuzzy boundary might be one that says that anything goes, or it might be a boundary that is strict one day, but totally ignored the next day.

Here are examples of boundaries.

Write R (Rigid), C (Clear), or F (Fuzzy) next to each boundary.

_____ “Beware of Dog!”	_____ “Mi casa es su casa.”
_____ “You kids stay off my lawn!”	_____ “I’m not going steady with anyone until high school, at the earliest.”
_____ “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”	_____ “YOLO!” (You only live once.)
_____ “Your curfew is 9:00 p.m. sharp!”	_____ “Good fences make good neighbors.”
_____ “You must be this tall to ride the roller coaster”	_____ “The more the merrier!”
_____ “This movie is rated PG-13. Parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may not be suitable for children under 13.”	_____ “Keep Out!”
	_____ “You can have the Internet password after you have done your homework and cleaned your room.”
	_____ “Any friend of yours is a friend of mine.”

What are your boundaries? _____

_____.

Does your family have any boundaries? _____

Who sets them? _____

What kind of boundaries do you find most frustrating—rigid, clear, or fuzzy? _____

Why? _____

Discussion Topics: ¹

1. Personal boundaries are rules and limits you set within relationships. They tell you what's okay, and what's not okay, in a relationship. Think about two people in your life, and describe the boundaries you have with each one. How are they similar, and how are they different?
2. Values are the things that are most important to you. Ideally, your boundaries will reflect your values. For example, if you value family time, you might set a specific family time. What are your most important values, and how do your boundaries reflect these values?
3. In your opinion, what are the signs of a healthy relationship? What sort of boundaries might you see in a healthy relationship?
4. People who are influential in your life act as models for boundary-setting, whether their boundaries are healthy or unhealthy. Think of someone who has helped shape who you are. What has this person taught you about boundaries, whether intentionally or unintentionally?
5. When someone has rigid boundaries, they are reluctant to ask others for help, they may be overly protective of personal information, or strongly avoid of close relationships. What do you think are the pros and cons of rigid boundaries? Describe an area of life where you've had rigid boundaries.
6. When someone has fuzzy boundaries, they may overshare personal information, have difficulty saying "no", or are overly concerned with the opinions of others. What do you think are the pros and cons of overly fuzzy boundaries? Describe an area of life where you've had fuzzy boundaries.
7. In some relationships, healthy boundaries seem to form naturally and easily, while in other relationships, however, setting healthy boundaries is more difficult. What challenges have you faced when trying to set healthy boundaries, and how did you overcome them (or how could you overcome them)?

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What's The Big Deal If Someone Violates My Boundaries?

Many people respond habitually to others without thinking about the impact of their actions. Communicating in a clear way about what you need means that you are taking responsibility for own emotions and developing relationships that are built on trust and respect.

How should you react if your boundaries have been ignored? You should remain calm and explain what you need from others that is different from how they are behaving toward you.

Once someone has violated your boundaries, you may feel like you have to have overly physical contact with them even if you don't want to.

You may feel like you owe them something. You may think you would get in just as much trouble as they would if you told someone.

But it's not true. It's not your fault and there are adults who want to help you.

It's important to understand that everyone has the right to set boundaries. A simple, "no" or a brief statement indicating that a behavior is unacceptable, is enough. We don't need to defend our boundaries to others, only to state why they are important to you.

What Are Physical Boundaries?

Physical boundaries are where you draw the lines about:

Who can touch you?

How much they can touch you, and

Where they can touch you

Violations can be:

- Touching too much
- "accidentally touching in private areas
- Wrestling or tickling too much
- Holding you on someone's lap
- Hugging too much or with too much body contact

What Are Emotional Boundaries?

An emotional boundary is a limit we establish to protect ourselves from being hurt, manipulated, or used by others. It is an expression of self-worth that helps people understand who we are, what we think, and how we feel. They create needed emotional space between us and others.

Healthy emotional boundaries mean we know and understand our limits and those limits are clearly and honestly communicated. They help preserve one's integrity and increase resilience. Communicating a boundary does not mean "I'm right and you are wrong." It simply means, "This is what I need to feel positive about myself and respected by you."

Healthy emotional boundaries may include:

- Moving slowly into friendships to establish trust
- Stating personal values despite what others believe
- Respecting others, despite their differences
- Respecting oneself, even though someone may not like you
- Clearly communicating needs and wants, even though you may be rejected
- Noticing when your personal boundaries feel invaded
- Understanding that others cannot anticipate your needs

Unhealthy emotional boundaries may include:

- Trusting no one, or everyone
- Going against personal values to please others or to be liked
- Giving as much as you can for the sake of being liked
- Allowing friends to direct your life, without questioning
- Letting others define you
- Falling apart or being a victim so others will take care of you
- Believing that others can anticipate your needs

What Are Behavioral Boundaries?

Behavioral boundaries are where you draw the lines about:

What you will or won't do

What set of rules you will or won't follow?

Violations can be:

- Talking about sexual activities
- Showing you pornography
- Giving you alcohol or drugs
- Keeping secrets from you parents or trusted adult
- Getting you to lie or do things you know are wrong

DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION
Appropriate Displays of Affection

Asking permission before touching
Side hugs (with adults)
Brief shoulder to shoulder hugs
Pats on the shoulder or back
Handshakes
"High-fives" and hand slapping
Verbal praise
Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms
Arms around shoulders
Holding hands during prayer or when a person is upset
Holding hands while walking with small children

Inappropriate Displays of Affection

Any form of unwanted affection
Full frontal hugs or "bear hugs"
Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas
Massages
Patting others on the thigh, knee, or leg
Tickling or wrestling
Touching or hugging from behind or games involving inappropriate touching
Kisses on the mouth
Special gift giving from a certain person

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS

- ✓ Speaking graphically about sexual activities (including your own) and/or allowing others to do so (this includes telling sexually suggestive jokes)
- ✓ Showing pornographic materials (photos, films, cartoons, stories, and drawings) to others
- ✓ Allowing anyone to become sexual with you
- ✓ Assaultive behavior with another, specifically including spanking, shaking, slapping, wrestling, tickling or physically punishing children or youth
- ✓ Giving persons tobacco products
- ✓ Shaming, degrading, ridiculing, threatening, belittling, or humiliating another person
- ✓ Using foul or abusive language
- ✓ Having physical contact with another that can be misinterpreted
- ✓ Being nude in front of others
- ✓ Being in bed with children or youth
- ✓ Keeping "secrets" about relationships
- ✓ Showing affection when no one else is around or in bedrooms, closets, restricted areas, and other private rooms
- ✓ Staring, or taking pictures or video/digital recording while others are dressing
- ✓ Commenting on others' bodies

What Do I Do If Someone Tells Me They Have Been Abused?

Remember, you are not a trained counselor so don't try to do more than you can.

Listen.

Avoid expressing shock or outrage.

Avoid questions that could make the person feel responsible.

Encourage the person to contact a supervisor or their parent.

Tell the person you will have to confide in your supervisor or a trusted adult.

Keep it confidential!

What If I Have Been Abused And I Feel Like It Was My Fault?

First, you need to know that child molesters are very clever at making kids think it was their fault, not yours.

Second, just because you may have done some things that you are ashamed of or wished you hadn't done, doesn't mean the abuse was your fault.

What If This Is Happening To A Friend?

You may have told your friend that you would not tell anyone about the abuse

Your friend needs you to be strong and take action to help

You can encourage your friend to speak up, tell someone, or to try to stay away from the person so that the abuse can't happen again.

If your friend will not take action, you may have to talk to:

- One or both of your parents; or

- A trusted adult at school or church; or

- A trusted family member; or

- A family friend that you trust; or

- Your friend's parents; or

- The police; or

- Child protective services (CPS)

HOW TO MAKE A REPORT:

If you suspect abuse of a child, or elder or vulnerable adult, or abuse has been disclosed to you,

1. Call CPS, **800-252-5400** or call the Police or **911**; get a case number or copy of report.
2. Immediately report the alleged abuse to your supervisor, a Priest, the Principal at your school or trusted adult.

Diocese of Fort Worth

<https://fwdioc.org>

817.945.9342

PROMISE TO
PROTECT



PLEDGE TO
HEAL