

Lesson 6 for Grades 9-12

Boundaries: Feelings and Facts

PRINCIPLE

Youth should be taught tools to recognize what it feels like when adults or other youth do not uphold healthy boundaries. Youth need to understand objective and subjective signs of boundary infringement, how it physically and emotionally might feel and what to do about it.

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

—Deuteronomy 31:6

OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, the adult lesson leader teaches students specifically about boundaries, what unsafe situations *feel* like, and what to do in response. After Lesson 6, youth should be better able to:

- Distinguish the difference between objective situations where boundaries are violated or infringed upon and healthy relationships
- Recognize the range of sensations beginning with feeling “uncomfortable” to potentially feeling unsafe or violated (physically and emotionally).
- Respond appropriately to unsafe situations involving themselves or their friends:
 - Pay attention to their bodies, feelings and what they know is safe/unsafe
 - Say “No!” if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe (or violated)
 - Try to leave the situation if they feel uncomfortable
 - Tell a safe adult as soon as soon as possible

Technology Component: Understand similar actions apply for Online settings, too.

Background for Lesson Leaders:

While adults are the chief protectors of youth, there are still ways we can teach youth to better protect themselves when faced with tough situations. Personal boundaries are established during our early years, and adults must help youth to create their own proper boundaries and respect the ones that are in place—understanding that youth will model adult behavior. An important concept in teaching youth about their boundaries is to teach them what is safe and unsafe.

As a next step, youth must also learn what safe environments are, and, how to recognize discomfort, unsafe situations, or when someone violates their boundaries. Youth need to understand, logically, what it actually feels like to be uncomfortable (to feel discomfort), or to feel like something is wrong, so that they know (in addition to the objective information we give them through the lessons) what things subjectively feel like, and then what to do in response.

This lesson will provide them with specific examples of the clear signs and subjective feelings that could occur if an adult or another youth is infringing upon their boundaries, as well as what to do if that is happening, or has happened, to themselves or to a friend.

Keep in mind some of these myths to unpack during the lessons: sometimes youth may not be aware that they're allowed to say “no” to a behavior that makes them uncomfortable. They may make promises with their peers to keep secrets in an attempt to protect them, not realizing that it's most important to deliver knowledge about unsafe situations to safe adults. They'll also need to know that it's never their fault (nor will it ever be their fault) if they or someone they know has been abused, or is hurting.

Interacting with this age group: 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 youth's online behavior and boundaries may need to be fortified.

Prior to Teaching the Lessons—A Map for Lesson Leaders

1. **Complete the VIRTUS Children's Programs Lesson Leader Orientation and Certification Training.** This training module will provide the foundational knowledge necessary for any Lesson Leader to successfully lead a safe environment lesson. For access to this training, please communicate with your diocesan coordinator.
2. **Review the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide: Safe Environment Guide for Caring Adults, Parents and Guardians*.** This document gives a wealth of information regarding boundaries. While adults are the main protectors of youth, there are skills youth can learn to better protect themselves and each other when faced with tough situations where caring adults aren't present. For access to this resource, please communicate with your diocesan coordinator.
3. **Review the Key Vocabulary Words for Lesson Leaders to Know** (below). These key words and concepts should be woven throughout the entire lesson. The lesson leader should read through and understand these terms and apply them to each activity.

Key Vocabulary Words for Lesson Leaders to Know

Rules—a prescribed guide for conduct or action. We follow the rules to make sure we are safe—just like how we have a seatbelt rule to keep us safe in the car, or the safety rules before we cross the street. [For example, teach the youth a simple rule for what to do if someone tries to touch him / her in an unsafe way, which is to say “No!”, try to get away, and tell an adult as soon as possible.]

Limits—the point or edge beyond which something cannot go. The furthest edge of something.

Rights—We are all born free and equal, and have certain rights that are automatically ours. Everyone is entitled to these rights, and they should not be taken away from us. For example, teach youth, “you have a right to be safe, and your body belongs to you!”

Boundaries—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can't see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our “personal space”). Boundaries vary depending on the relationship with the other person. For example, a boundary between a youth and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a youth and a teacher or coach.

Respecting boundaries—we should have respect for ourselves, and respect for others. Respect for ourselves means we understand our dignity and value as a person, and work to create or maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. We feel upset or uncomfortable when someone doesn't honor our own boundaries, and we communicate with the right person if we need help. Respecting another's boundaries means you care about them, and won't do anything that would bring them harm, and that you communicate with the right person to get them help if they are being harmed by someone else. [Give children examples of respecting others, i.e. not calling people mean names, not hitting others, following rules at school or at home, stopping an activity when someone asks, letting an adult know when someone is in pain or hurt, etc.]

Saying “No”—to say “no” means to refuse, deny, reject or express disapproval of. This word is used to express a boundary and communicate that you do not want something to happen or continue. [Let youth know It's OK to say “No” to an adult if they make you feel scared or uncomfortable, or if they touch your private body parts.]

Secret—something kept hidden, never told or unexplained. Secrets exclude others and have potential to harm, sometimes causing the person involved to feel frightened or uncomfortable. [For example, let youth know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell youth that it's wrong for an adult or another youth to ask a youth to keep a secret about safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt. If an individual tries to make a youth keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the youth must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the youth will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of “telling”.]

Feelings—Your emotional state, such as being happy, sad, excited or nervous. Your feelings help you understand what you like and what you don't like. Feelings can also help you determine whether you like what is happening to you (such as feeling happy when playing with a friend) or you do not like what is happening to you (such as getting upset if you drop an ice cream cone on the ground, or having your stomach feel yucky if someone touches you in an unsafe way).

Discomfort—To feel uneasy, anxious, or embarrassed (such as when your face starts to feel hot and get red because you tripped on the playground in front of your friends).

Uncomfortable—Experiencing discomfort that leaves one feeling uneasy, sometimes causing anxiety or feelings of nausea. [It might be a feeling in the “pit of your stomach” or it could be the hairs standing up on the back of your neck. You may freeze, want to fight or feel like running away from the situation.]

Feeling safe—When you are with a safe adult or safe friend (someone who listens to you, consistently respects your boundaries, and follows the rules) and you feel happy and cared for. You feel comfortable and calm.

Feeling unsafe (not right)—To feel scared, nervous, anxious or uneasy. You might be worried that something bad is going to happen. Your body might start to sweat, or your stomach might feel sick and you know that something is not right. [This could happen if an unsafe adult or unsafe friend puts you in danger for their own purposes, or doesn't follow the rules or respect your boundaries.]

Confusing—is something that is hard to figure out because it doesn't make sense, it is unclear or puzzling. To cause confusion is to cause an inability to think clearly or to be misleading. [An example is a big, messy knot—it can be confusing because it's hard to figure out where each part goes how to straighten it all out.]

Rude—describes behavior where someone inadvertently or accidentally does or says something hurtful. Rudeness is usually unplanned, and not *intended* to hurt. [Examples include social awkwardness, such as burping into someone's face, cutting someone off, behaving narcissistically, having poor manners, bragging about an accomplishment, etc.]

Mean—describes behavior where someone says or does something hurtful on purpose, once (maybe twice). The aim is to intentionally hurt, and is often motivated by anger. [Examples include putting someone down so the mean person looks/sounds better, making fun of how the person dresses or looks, insulting person's skills or intelligence or saying / behaving in an unkind way after a disagreement, saying things like: "why would you wear that, it looks terrible on you" or "you're so dumb, you should quit."]

Bullying—is different from being rude or mean. It is cruel; the intentional, repeated exposure of negative and aggressive behaviors to a targeted person over time. The bully will say or do something intentionally hurtful, and keep doing it, without a sense of remorse. A key aspect is the ongoing pattern, involving an imbalance of power where the bully has more control or influence. [Examples include physical, verbal and emotional aggression, in-person and online; social exclusion, hazing others, spreading rumors or inappropriate content, cyberbullying, etc.]

Sexual abuse is when one pressures, forces or *tries* to force the other to do a sexual activity—even *kissing*—against their will, or without consent, which means that it isn't wanted (or that the person cannot give consent due to being incapacitated due to drugs, alcohol, fear, pressure, or some other reason, like changing their mind at any time). **Child sexual abuse** is when an adult does these behaviors with a child or youth—even a teen. A minor is legally incapable of giving consent to sexual behavior, and so when an adult does these behaviors with a person who is a minor, it is considered to be child sexual abuse.

Safe friends and safe adults—safe people won't hurt you without a good reason and won't intentionally confuse you. They listen to and consistently respect boundaries, and follow the rules. [Explain that a youth may have many safe friends and adults. Give youth examples of adult behavior that could hurt them, but may be necessary for the youth's safety, i.e. medical exams, vaccinations, throat swabs, removing splinters, stopping a child from running into the road, etc.]

DURING THE LESSON

Each lesson should begin with the Introductory Video. Following the video, you are able to choose which activity options you would like to do with your students. There are multiple activities to choose from, and you may choose to do one or all of the activities. Each activity can also be tailored to the needs and grade level of your students.

STEP 1: Play Introductory Video

The introductory video for youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion about personal boundary safety. The brief video is not intended to be a substitute for the lesson itself. It's merely an introduction designed to "break the ice" and assist the transition of completing the interactive Lesson Activity Options. If the video is shown as an optional activity, please use in conjunction with one of the additional activity options, because discussion and practice are critical components needed to teach youth how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing;" not just listening. Please communicate with your coordinator to obtain video access.

ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Feelings and Boundaries Are a Significant Part of Healthy Relationships

Background: This activity will provide opportunities for discussion on the role of feelings and boundaries within healthy relationships, and what it *feels* like [physically, emotionally and psychologically] when a youth is in an unsafe situation, and actions they can take to be safer.

Discussion: **Begin the activity with a discussion regarding relationships, and what healthy relationships are vs. unhealthy relationships are.**

SUPPLIES

Printed copy of one scenario—cut out for each small group (from the *Feelings and Boundaries Are a Significant Part of Healthy Relationships Worksheet* below).

Say: Our lives are made up of relationships with everyone around us, including relationships between family members, teachers, coaches, other adults, acquaintances—our friends—and other significant people in our lives.

Ask: What makes a relationship healthy? (Key elements include two individuals who are committed to: having mutual respect, freedom to be one's self, honoring each other's boundaries, and communicating in healthy ways.) For example, if a friend asks you to do something they feel is unsafe or they don't like, people who have healthy boundaries would stop that behavior immediately. People who truly care about you want you to be safe and feel safe will behave with respect toward you.

Ask: How do I know if a relationship is unhealthy—even peer friendships? (It's unhealthy when there isn't respect, when power is used to manipulate, name-calling, a lack of kindness, when there's dishonesty, when it hurts or is confusing, when someone tries to get you to do something you don't want to do, when there's abuse, etc.)

Say: As we can see, there are *objective* standards to healthy relationships and ways that we can define whether it's healthy or unhealthy—these are what we just discussed, which are specific indicators of an unhealthy relationship. And, there are also "subjective" feelings we experience that could help to underscore whether it can be healthy or unhealthy, too. Feelings are "subjective" because they are not the same for everyone and different people may experience different feelings.

While sometimes we may put a lot of emphasis on our feelings, this is not always the best indicator as to whether something is good or bad. While we definitely want to pay attention to our feelings, it's also important to take into consideration the objective, or more tangible, visible, elements of any relationship or interaction.

Let's talk more about emotions: First, feelings are normal—they're neither good, nor bad, and everyone has them. Having feelings is a healthy part of being a person.

We all know when we are happy, joyful, excited, content or calm... Some typical events that spur these types of feelings include: a birthday party, attending a large event, going to a friend's house, going on vacation, hearing a favorite song, playing a sport, etc.

Then, explain that sometimes, things might happen to us that might cause us to feel ways that our bodies don't like as much. *Sometimes our bodies might react in a way we don't expect.* Sometimes our bodies show us about the reality of a situation, which is why it's important for us to recognize the objective standards of healthy relationships, and these feelings that show us when our bodies might feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

The feelings we have in our body are telling our brain something—whether it is for something happy or for something wrong, uncomfortable or unsafe. **Feeling uncomfortable or unsafe might feel like the following:**

- Your body might want to take flight—wanting to run away or get away
- Your body might freeze—feeling like you can't move, like your body feels like concrete
- Your body might feel heavy or stuck
- Your body might want to strike out and hit something
- Your stomach might feel sick, like you want to throw up
- You might feel confusion—not knowing what to do, or understanding what is happening
- And, you might feel disconnected, like you're watching something happen to you—and maybe not even feeling it physically

Activity:

Divide youth into small groups (into as many groups as you wish to role play the 4 different scenarios; you can also give groups more than one scenario). Give each group a different scenario and ask them to prepare a skit for what they could do if that situation happened to them, and have them act it out. Conversely, you can talk about each of them together as one big group.

Note: Inform the youth they should only pretend to do the physical actions in the scenarios.

Regardless of group sizes, you may need to guide their responses in some of the scenarios. When the question of "what might your body be telling you" is asked, the youth should be led to say that their bodies are showing them that they feel discomfort, uncomfortable, unsafe, as if their boundaries are being impacted, etc. And, when their bodies feel that way, they have to do something healthy to address it!

Scenarios:

Scenario #1: *At an outdoor event, you see a recently-graduated former student that you used to have a crush on. The person tells you how attractive you look. You tell your friends that you are fine, and push them away so you can spend one-on-one time with this person. You're having a ton of fun! But, by the end of the event, the person starts rubbing your shoulders and saying things that make you feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. They're starting to touch you in ways that you aren't ready for and they kiss you. Even though you were having fun at first, you realize*

*that you don't like the way this person is acting anymore. This makes you embarrassed so your face starts to feel hot and gets red and your heart starts beating faster because you are uncomfortable. Since you invited their attention in the first place, you feel stuck and like you have to let them keep touching you, even though your body wants to get away. **Is this a healthy or unhealthy situation? What is your body telling you? Do you have to stay? What can you do?***

- **Explain: Sexual abuse** is when one (even a boyfriend) pressures, forces or *tries* to force the other to do a sexual activity—even kissing—against their will, or without consent, which means that it isn't wanted (or that the person cannot give consent due to being incapacitated due to drugs, alcohol, fear, pressure, or some other reason, like changing their mind at any time).
- You have the right to stop any type of behavior that you don't like at ANY TIME, even if you seemed to give consent in the beginning; and, your boundaries should be listened to.
- Say “NO! I don't like it when you do that.”
- Shrug your shoulders and move away so they stop.
- Leave and go somewhere else.
- Tell a safe adult, or, a friend who can help you speak to a safe adult.
- Call your parents to come and pick you up.

Scenario #2: *You are very excited that you have a soccer tournament coming up in another state, which your whole team has been planning for months. Since your parents have to work, they said you could go on your own this time, since they trust your coach and know that there should be other chaperones. Before the trip, you were told that all of the players would have their own room. However, once you arrive at the hotel, the coach tells you the hotel messed up the room scheduling and now you'll have to room with the coach on a different floor from everyone else; coach winks at you and starts handing out keys and ordering the other chaperones to specific rooms. At first, you feel special because you think you might get to play more by getting special treatment. Then, once you are in the room with the coach by yourself, you see that there's only one bed and you start to feel like this is a bad situation. You are nervous about making a big scene and causing trouble, and potentially losing your ability to play in the tournament that you've been working hard for. You feel like you can't breathe well and your heart starts beating really fast. **What is your body telling you? Is this a healthy or unhealthy situation? What can you do?***

- Remember, it doesn't matter if you initially decided that you felt like you were in a healthy or safe situation. You can always change your mind, especially when you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. It's important to speak up for yourself if you can—and a safe person will always listen to you when it comes to your boundaries. Remember the boundaries safety rules:
 - Say, “no!”, tell the coach you would rather room with one of your teammates.
 - Leave, if you can, and immediately get help from an adult. Find another adult chaperone, another parent or another safe adult, and ask them for help.
 - Communicate everything to your parents or another safe adult. Ask a friend or safe adults to help you talk to them if you need extra courage.

Scenario #3: *An adult, who is well-liked in your community, gives your 15-year-old best friend \$300 to spend any way your friend wants, and you suspect there must be a catch. But, your friend ignores your warning, and spends it quickly! In fact, your friend seems to be spending a lot of time with that adult and lying to their parents about it. Your friend seems obsessed with this person! Your friend suddenly wants to talk to you, and asks you to keep it a secret before they'll say anything. You agree, and your friend confides to you that they're now in a relationship with the adult, that they love each other—and that the person respects them and that it's a really healthy relationship. You feel like this is wrong because the other person is an adult while your friend is only 15, but your friend says it's not a big deal because they'll be 16 in a few months. Your friend reminds you that you promised confidentiality and that you can't break a promise. You're so worried about it that you're having a hard time sleeping and you feel anxious. You're torn to the point of feeling sick about it, because you don't want to ruin a friendship with your best friend, and you feel like you need to be there for them for anything, because, isn't that what friends do to support each other? Plus, part of you just wants to let your friend be happy, and your friend seems happy right now, even though the situations seems wrong. **What is your body telling you? Is this a healthy or unhealthy situation? What can you do?***

- **Ask:** Is it every okay for an adult to be in a romantic relationship with a child or youth, even if it seems healthy and they say they are in love?

ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Feelings and Boundaries

Print out this sheet and cut into strips, so you can give one scenario to each small group.

Scenario #1: At an outdoor event, you see a person in a crowd that you used to have a crush on. The person lets you know they're still there. You tell your friends that you are fine, and push them away so you can spend one-on-one time with this person. You're having a lot of fun! But, by the end of the event, the person starts touching your shoulders and saying things that make you feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. They're starting to touch you in ways that you aren't ready for and they kiss you. Even though you were having fun at first, you realize that you don't like the way this person is acting anymore. This makes you embarrassed so your face starts to feel hot and gets red and your heart starts beating faster because you are uncomfortable. Since you invited their attention in the first place, you feel stuck and like you have to let them keep touching you, even though your body wants to get away. **Is this a healthy or unhealthy situation? What is your body telling you? Do you have to stay? What can you do?**

Scenario #2: You are very excited that you have a soccer tournament coming up in another state, which your whole team has been planning for months. Since your parents have to work, they said you could go on your own this time, since they trust your coach and know that there should be other chaperones. Before the trip, you were told that all of the players would have their own room. However, once you arrive at the hotel, the coach tells you the hotel messed up the room scheduling and now you'll have to room with the coach on a different floor from everyone else; coach winks at you and starts handing out keys and ordering the other chaperones to specific rooms. At first, you feel special because you think you might get to play more by getting special treatment. Then, once you are in the room with the coach by yourself, you see that there's only one bed and you start to feel like this is a bad situation. You are nervous about making a big scene and causing trouble, and potentially losing your ability to play in the tournament that you've been working hard for. You feel like you can't breathe well and your heart starts beating really fast. **What is your body telling you? Is this a healthy or unhealthy situation? What can you do?**

Scenario #3: An adult, who is well-liked in your community, gives your 15-year-old best friend \$300 to spend any way your friend wants, and you suspect there must be a catch. But, your friend ignores your warning, and spends it quickly! In fact, your friend seems to be spending a lot of time with that adult and lying to their parents about it. Your friend seems obsessed with this person! Your friend suddenly wants to talk to you, and asks you to keep it a secret before they'll say anything. You agree, and your friend confides to you that they're now in a relationship with the adult, that they love each other—and that the person respects them and that it's a really healthy relationship. You feel like this is wrong because the other person is an adult while your friend is only 15, but your friend says it's not a big deal because they'll be 16 in a few months. Your friend reminds you that you promised confidentiality and that you can't break a promise. You're so worried about it that you're having a hard time sleeping and you feel anxious. You're torn to the point of feeling sick about it, because you don't want to ruin a friendship with your best friend, and you feel like you need to be there for them for anything, because, isn't that what friends do to support each other? Plus, part of you just wants to let your friend be happy, and your friend seems happy right now, even though the situations seems wrong. **What is your body telling you? Is this a healthy or unhealthy situation? What can you do?**

ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Feelings and Boundaries

Scenario #4: Lately at school, Olivia, one of your really good friends, has been really down because of problems at home and school. Recently, Olivia started talking to a guy on the internet through her favorite social media app. Everything she has told you about him and their conversations seemed okay at first, and it seemed like she was really into him. Olivia said they were only talking, but then she told you she sent him pictures of herself without any clothes on. You know that you're not supposed to do this, but you know other "cool" kids at school who have done it too, so it doesn't seem like a big deal. After that, the online guy started demanding more and said if Olivia really loved him she would keep sending him pictures. Following this, Olivia said she wanted to be in charge of the relationship, and wanted to meet him in person, but she knows her parents won't let her. Olivia asked if she could tell her parents that she was going to your house, when really she was going to meet him for a "date." You don't want to agree, but Olivia says that she will never forgive you if you don't help her, so you rationalize your worry away because her date is in public and others will be around—and really, how bad could it be? But, later, you receive a text from Olivia that he is a lot older than she expected (he's her dad's age!), but that he is "really cool," and they have a lot in common. Olivia then sends you a picture of flowers and jewelry he brought her, and excitedly tells you he is taking her to a hotel room for an even bigger surprise that she can't wait to see, at the hotel over an hour away. Once you hear this news, you immediately get goosebumps and feel chills. You tell her back that it's a bad idea and that she should leave, but she isn't listening. Sometimes she doesn't answer so this isn't immediately alarming, but you can't help imagining horrible things that could happen and you feel like you can't even get the phone because your hands are gripping it so tightly. **What is your body telling you? Is this a healthy relationship? Is it a safe situation? What can you do?**

It is never okay for an adult to be in a romantic relationship with a child or youth, no matter the circumstances. It is unhealthy. It is illegal and this is considered sexual abuse. **Sexual abuse** is when one pressures, forces or *tries* to force the other to do a sexual activity—even *kissing*—against their will, or without consent, which means that it isn't wanted (or that the person cannot give consent due to being incapacitated due to drugs, alcohol, fear, pressure, or some other reason, like changing their mind at any time). **Child sexual abuse** is when an adult does these behaviors with a child or youth—even a teen. A minor is legally incapable of giving consent to sexual behavior, and so when an adult does these behaviors with a person who is a minor, it is considered to be child sexual abuse.

- Our friends are the ones who are most likely to recognize when we are in an unhealthy situation. As a friend, even a “peripheral one,” this is why it's important to listen, and be kind, even if you aren't very close.
- **Ask:** Can you promise confidentiality to a friend about abuse? (No, you, as a friend, *cannot promise* complete confidentiality when hearing about abuse, because there may come a time where you will need to communicate with a safe adult on their behalf—to protect them.)
- **Ask:** So, what if you've *already* promised to keep it a secret—can you—or... *should* you—share the information with the right person who can help? (Yes. *Because, there are unsafe secrets that harm others and cannot be kept. Sharing information regarding an unsafe secret is actually the safe and right thing to do to keep our friends healthy and safe.*)
- **Ask:** Does sharing it betray the person and their confidence? (No. It's *helping* them—when they can't get the help they need themselves. That's being a good friend, even if it doesn't *feel* like it, because you are watching out for someone else's safety.)
- **Conclusion:** In any case, regardless of who it is, or why they're doing the behavior, or even the circumstances involved, unsafe situations have to get to a safe adult. A **safe adult** is one who prioritizes safety.

Note: The Lesson Leader should be careful to communicate to youth that they are not responsible for each other. Misinforming youth by saying that one person's welfare is a youth's responsibility could make a child feel more guilt if they weren't able to prevent or stop abuse from occurring for themselves or a friend. The distinction for this lesson is that there are times when youth are being abused, or they know a peer is in need of help, but, they don't always know the best way to assist. Being a safe friend means that children do the “right thing” for themselves, and for each other—meaning that they perform action, or intervene in safe ways when they are aware of a problem.

Scenario #4: Lately at school, Olivia, one of your really good friends has been really down because of problems at home and school. Recently, Olivia started talking to a guy on the Internet through her favorite social media app. Everything she has told you about him and their conversations seemed okay at first, and it seemed like she was really into him. Olivia said they were only talking, but then she told you she sent him pictures of herself without any clothes on. You know that you're not supposed to do this, but you know other “cool” kids at school who have done it too, so it doesn't seem like a big deal. After that, the online guy started demanding more and said if Olivia really loved him she would keep sending him pictures. Following this, Olivia said she wanted to be in charge of the relationship, and wanted to meet him in person, but she knows her parents won't let her. Olivia asked if she could tell her parents that she was going to your house, when really she was going to meet him for a “date.” You don't want to agree, but Olivia says that she will never forgive you if you don't help her, so you rationalize your worry away because her date is in public and others will be around—and really, how bad could it be? But, later, you receive a text from Olivia that he is a lot older than she expected (like, her dad's age!), but that he is “really cool” and they have a lot in common. Olivia then sends you a picture of flowers and jewelry he brought her, and excitedly tells you he is taking her a hotel room for an even bigger surprise that she can't wait to see, at the hotel over an hour away. Once you hear this news, you immediately get goosebumps and feel chilled. You text her back that it's a bad idea and that she should leave, but she isn't answering. Sometimes she doesn't answer so this isn't immediately alarming, but you can't help imagining horrible things that could happen and you feel like you can't even let the phone go because your hands are gripping it so tightly. **What is your body telling you? Is this a healthy relationship? Is it a safe situation? What can you do?**

- Immediately tell your parents or another safe adult—even the police. This could be an emergency, so calling 911 is the right choice to make to get someone there as quickly as possible. You can always call 911 yourself, or ask another safe adult to do this for you, because there is a possibility Olivia is in danger. However, don't wait and don't hesitate! It's always better to call 911 right away than to wait.
- **Child exploitation:** In many cases, when a youth shares sexual or naked images of themselves over the Internet (even through sexting), most youth don't realize that this can be considered distributing child pornography—which is illegal. Even worse, these images can be shared without the original person's knowledge, and they often add to the pool of sexually exploited images of children. If you encounter any situation while on the Internet of the sexual exploitation of children (including naked images), it's important to call the CyberTipline, which is a safe reporting system.
- Call Olivia's parents, or ask your parents to, and tell them where she really is.

Conclusion:

1. If someone makes you feel any of these [physical, emotional or psychological] feelings, your body is telling you that something is the matter, that something is wrong.
2. If you ever feel this way, it is not your fault! Remember, feelings aren't wrong, but if you feel unsafe, worried, uncomfortable, etc., then it's your body is giving you a response that needs attention! If you have ever been mistreated in a relationship, it can be really confusing. It's easy to blame yourself. If someone hurts you physically, emotionally, sexually or in some other way—you *did nothing to cause the abuse*. A lot of people don't know what to do when they experience unsafe or unhealthy relationships. They might feel like there's no way out, or be afraid to ask for help. It has nothing to do with your level of intelligence or strength. It's always the fault of the person who is abusing.
3. You deserve to be in a healthy relationship with healthy boundaries and safe friends. If you can recognize problematic behaviors or abuse, try to do the right thing by finding a way to help yourself—it's never too late for this. And, help your friends, too—this involves courage. You don't deserve to be treated poorly—no one does. If you, or someone you know is in an unhealthy relationship, try to say "no!" to the person, do whatever you need to do to get away as soon as possible, and tell a safe adult right away.

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Speak up about Boundaries

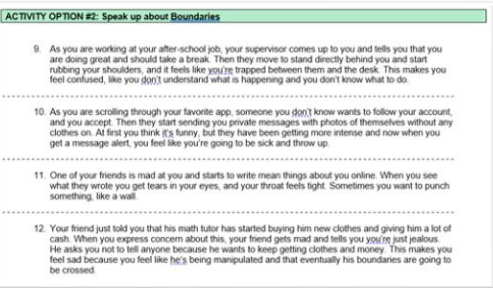
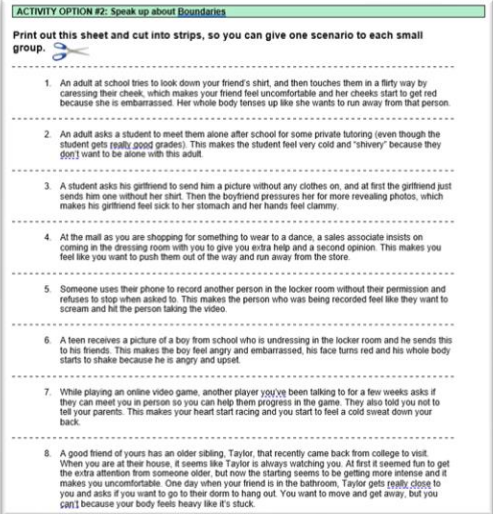
Background: This activity will provide opportunities for discussion on demonstrating the ability to speak up about healthy relationships, boundaries and feelings.

Preparation: In advance of the lesson, print out the *Speak up about Boundaries Worksheet* and cut each scenario into a separate strip of paper. Refer to these as the "Scenarios."

1. An adult at school tries to look down your friend's shirt, and then touches them in a flirty way by caressing their cheek, which makes your friend feel uncomfortable and her cheeks start to get red because she is embarrassed. Her whole body tenses up like she wants to run away from that person.
2. An adult asks a student to meet them alone after school for some private tutoring (even though the student gets really good grades). This makes the student feel very cold and "shivery" because they don't want to be alone with this adult.
3. A student asks his girlfriend to send him a picture without any clothes on, and at first the girlfriend just sends him one without her shirt. Then the boyfriend pressures her for more revealing photos, which makes his girlfriend feel sick to her stomach and her hands feel clammy.
4. At the mall as you are shopping for something to wear to a dance, a sales associate insists on coming in the dressing room with you to give you extra help and a second opinion. This makes you feel like you want to push them out of the way and run away from the store.
5. Someone uses their phone to record another person in the locker room without their permission and refuses to stop when asked to. This makes the person who was being recorded feel like they want to scream and hit the person taking the video.
6. A teen receives a picture of a boy from school who is undressing in the locker room and he sends this to his friends. This makes the boy feel angry and embarrassed, his face turns red and his whole body starts to shake because he is angry and upset.
7. While playing an online video game, another player you've been talking to for a few weeks asks if they can meet you in person so you can help them progress in the game. They also told you not to tell your parents. This makes your heart start racing and you start to feel a cold sweat down your back.
8. A good friend of yours has an older sibling, Taylor, that recently came back from college to visit. When you are at their house, it seems like Taylor is always watching you. At first it seemed fun to get the extra attention from someone older, but now the starting seems to be getting more intense and it makes you uncomfortable. One day when your friend is in the bathroom, Taylor gets really close to you and asks if you want to go to their dorm to hang out. You want to move and get away, but you can't because your body feels heavy like it's stuck.

SUPPLIES

Printed copy of one scenario—cut out for each small group (from the *Speak up about Boundaries Worksheet* below).



9. As you are working at your after-school job, your supervisor comes up to you and tells you that you are doing great and should take a break. Then they move to stand directly behind you and start rubbing your shoulders, and it feels like you're trapped between them and the desk. This makes you feel confused, like you don't understand what is happening and you don't know what to do.
10. As you are scrolling through your favorite app, someone you don't know wants to follow your account, and you accept. Then they start sending you private messages with photos of themselves without any clothes on. At first you think it's funny, but they have been getting more intense and now when you get a message alert, you feel like you're going to be sick and throw up.
11. One of your friends is mad at you and starts to write mean things about you online. When you see what they wrote you get tears in your eyes, and your throat feels tight. Sometimes you want to punch something, like a wall.
12. Your friend just told you that his math tutor has started buying him new clothes and giving him a lot of cash. When you express concern about this, your friend gets mad and tells you you're just jealous. He asks you not to tell anyone because he wants to keep getting clothes and money. This makes you feel sad because you feel like he's being manipulated and that eventually his boundaries are going to be crossed.

Discussion: **Say:** Each one of us is involved in relationships with everyone around us, including relationships between family members, teachers, coaches, other adults, acquaintances—our friends—and other significant people in our lives.

Healthy relationships include elements include two individuals who are committed to: having mutual respect, freedom to be one's self, honoring each other's boundaries, and communicating in healthy ways.) For example, if a friend asks you to do something they feel is unsafe or they don't like, people who have healthy boundaries would stop that behavior immediately. People who truly care about you want you to be safe and feel safe will behave with respect toward you.

Relationships are unhealthy (even among peer friendships) when there isn't respect, when power is used to manipulate, name-calling, a lack of kindness, when there's dishonesty, when it hurts or is confusing, when someone tries to get you to do something you don't want to do, when there's abuse, etc.

As we can see, there are *objective* standards to healthy relationships and ways that we can define whether it's healthy or unhealthy – these are what we just discussed, which are specific indicators of an unhealthy relationship. And, there are also “subjective” feelings we experience that could help to underscore whether it can be healthy or unhealthy, too. Feelings are “subjective” because they are not the same for everyone and different people may experience different feelings.

While sometimes we may put a lot of emphasis on our feelings, this is not always the best indicator as to whether something is good or bad. While we definitely want to pay attention to our feelings, it's also important to take into consideration the objective, or more tangible, visible, elements of any relationship or interaction.

Explain to the youth: Sometimes, things might happen to us that might cause us to have physical feelings we don't like very much, which is our bodies way of showing us the reality of a situation. We might feel uncomfortable, or “gross” inside, like we might be sick to our stomach. These physical feelings we have are telling our brain something—whether it is for something happy or for something wrong, uncomfortable or unsafe. Feeling uncomfortable or unsafe might feel like the following:

- Your body might want to take flight—wanting to run away or get away
 - Your body might freeze—feeling like you can't move, like your body feels like concrete
 - Your body might feel heavy or stuck
 - Your body might want to strike out and hit something
 - Your stomach might feel sick, like you want to throw up
 - You might feel confusion—not knowing what to do, or understanding what is happening
- And, you might feel disconnected, like you're watching something happen to you—and maybe not even feeling it physically

Sometimes our friends might be experiencing these feelings, too, because they might be afraid, or feel unsafe.

Ask, what does it mean to be a safe friend to others? Youth can also be a “safe person” for others. This is called being a “safe friend.” **As a youth, it's not your JOB (as a youth) to**

Note: The Lesson Leader should be careful to communicate to youth that they are not responsible for each other. Misinforming youth by saying that one person's welfare is a youth's responsibility could make a youth feel more guilt if they weren't able to prevent or stop abuse from occurring for themselves or a friend. The distinction for this lesson is that there are times when youth are being abused, or they know a peer is in need of help, but, they don't always know the best way to assist. Being a safe friend means that youth do the “right thing” for themselves, and for each other—meaning that they perform action, or intervene in safe ways when they are aware of a problem.

protect others. It is not your responsibility, because you are youth. But, when we do know that someone is hurt or hurting, then we **should try to help** by getting that information to a safe adult. Let's recap these really important points:

- Whose responsibility is it to keep youth safe? (ADULTS; it's the adult's job to protect youth)
- Can we, as youth, also help when we know there's a problem? (Yes, usually youth can help, too)
- How can we, as youth, help the most? (Take the information to a safe adult; a trustworthy person)

Note: Students should not act out any inappropriate behaviors or touches. Their acting should commence as if the scenario has already occurred—i.e., "picking up where it left off."

Activity:

Separate students into small groups. Assign a "Scenario" to each group—some may have more than one. Ask the groups to collaborate with each other to create a live scene that picks up after the index card scene has taken place. In each scene, ask students to include as part of their skit:

- How the situation could make someone feel.
- What should they do now? What is the solution?

This is all about teamwork—NOT judgement... Ask the audience to analyze the choices made to remedy the situation and allow comments from the whole group about how each scene was handled and what could be done differently. Guide the commentary to make sure students are portraying the Safe Environment Safety Rules as well as school/parish behavior expectations. Answers should always incorporate the following when it comes to feeling unsafe, or when boundaries are (or are about to be) violated—**always remember the safety plan:**

- Say "No!" because it's an unsafe touch.
- Try to leave and get away if possible.
- Tell a safe adult as soon as possible.

ACTIVITY OPTION #3: Body Responses to Feelings Crossword**Background:**

This activity will provide opportunities for students to learn about healthy relationships, boundaries, and to understand their feeling/emotions and what they can do about them. It opens discussion on what it feels like, physically and emotionally, when they feel they are in an unsafe situation and how to distinguish whether it is safe or not. There is a discussion component and a hands-on activity with a crossword.

Note: The worksheet template is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

SUPPLIES

Writing utensils
Copy of the Body Responses to Feelings Crossword for each student (printed).

Discussion:

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: Each one of us is involved in relationships with everyone around us, including relationships between family members, teachers, coaches, other adults, acquaintances—our friends—and other significant people in our lives.

Boundaries are the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can't see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our "personal space").

Respecting boundaries—we should have respect for ourselves, and respect for others. Respect for ourselves means we understand our dignity and value as a person, and work to create or maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. We feel upset or uncomfortable when someone doesn't honor our own boundaries, and we communicate with the right person if we need help. Respecting another's boundaries means you care about them, and won't do anything that would bring them harm, and that you communicate with the right person to get them help if they are being harmed by someone else.

Healthy relationships include elements include two individuals who are committed to: having mutual respect, freedom to be one's self, honoring each other's boundaries, and communicating in healthy ways.) For example, if a friend asks you to do something they feel is unsafe or they don't like, people who have healthy boundaries would stop that behavior immediately. People who truly care about you want you to be safe and feel safe will behave with respect toward you.

Relationships are unhealthy (even among peer friendships) when there isn't respect, when power is used to manipulate, name-calling, a lack of kindness, when there's dishonesty, when it hurts or is confusing, when someone tries to get you to do something you don't want to do, when there's abuse, etc.

As we can see, there are *objective* standards to healthy relationships and ways that we can define whether it's healthy or unhealthy—these are what we just discussed, which are specific indicators of an unhealthy relationship. And, there are also “subjective” feelings we experience that could help to underscore whether it can be healthy or unhealthy, too. Feelings are “subjective” because they are not the same for everyone and different people may experience different feelings.

While sometimes we may put a lot of emphasis on our feelings, this is not always the best indicator as to whether something is good or bad. While we definitely want to pay attention to our feelings, it's also important to take into consideration the objective, or more tangible, visible, elements of any relationship or interaction.

FEELINGS: Next, feelings are normal—they're neither good, nor bad, and everyone has them. Having feelings is a healthy part of being a person.

We all know when we are happy, joyful, excited, content or calm... Some typical events that spur these types of feelings include: a birthday party, attending a large event, going to a friend's house, going on vacation, hearing a favorite song, playing a sport, etc.

Then, explain that sometimes, things might happen to us that might cause us to feel ways that our bodies don't like as much. *Sometimes our bodies might react in a way we don't expect.* Sometimes our bodies show us about the reality of a situation, which is why it's important for us to recognize the objective standards of healthy relationships, and these feelings that show us when our bodies might feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

The feelings we have in our body are telling our brain something—whether it is for something happy or for something wrong, uncomfortable or unsafe. **Feeling uncomfortable or unsafe might feel like the following:**

- Your body might want to take flight—wanting to run away or get away
- Your body might freeze—feeling like you can't move, like your body feels like concrete
- Your body might feel heavy or stuck
- Your body might want to strike out and hit something
- Your stomach might feel sick, like you want to throw up
- You might feel confusion—not knowing what to do, or understanding what is happening
- And, you might feel disconnected, like you're watching something happen to you—and maybe not even feeling it physically

To recap, emotions include happiness, sadness, nervous, fear, being scared, upset, angry—all of these emotions are OK in that it's always OK to have feelings and show them.

But, it's NOT OK for someone to make you feel fear, scared, upset or angry when it comes to unsafe actions. If someone does make you feel this way, it's not your fault.

It IS ok to do whatever you need to do to get away and tell a safe adult when you don't feel safe!

Keep in mind: Youth can also be a “safe person” for others. This is called being a “safe friend.” **As a youth, it's not your JOB (as youth) to protect others. It is not your responsibility, because you are youth.** But, when we do know that someone is hurt or hurting, then we **should try to help** by getting that information to a safe adult. Let's recap these really important points:

- Whose responsibility is it to keep youth safe? (ADULTS; it's the adult's job to protect youth)
- Can we, as youth, also help when we know there's a problem? (Yes, usually youth can help, too)
- How can we, as youth, help the most? (Take the information to a safe adult; a trustworthy person—even if it means taking the information to the police.)

Tell safe adults when you need help; telling isn't “snitching”: Even if we don't realize it, we all have many safe people in our lives who want to help us. However, they don't always know when we need help unless we actually tell them.

Telling a safe adult when we, or others, need help is not “snitching” or “crossing the line.” You have a right to be safe! Your friends have a right to be safe. If you know that there's important information about safety, adults should listen to you. If a safe adult isn't listening to you, take the information to another safe adult. Keep taking the information to a trustworthy person, and may a different trustworthy person, until you feel that you've been heard.

Activity: Pass out the crossword worksheet. They can complete the crossword either individually or in small groups before the whole class discussion.

After the students have had the chance to complete the crossword puzzle, use the lesson leader answer key (provided below) to walk them through all responses.

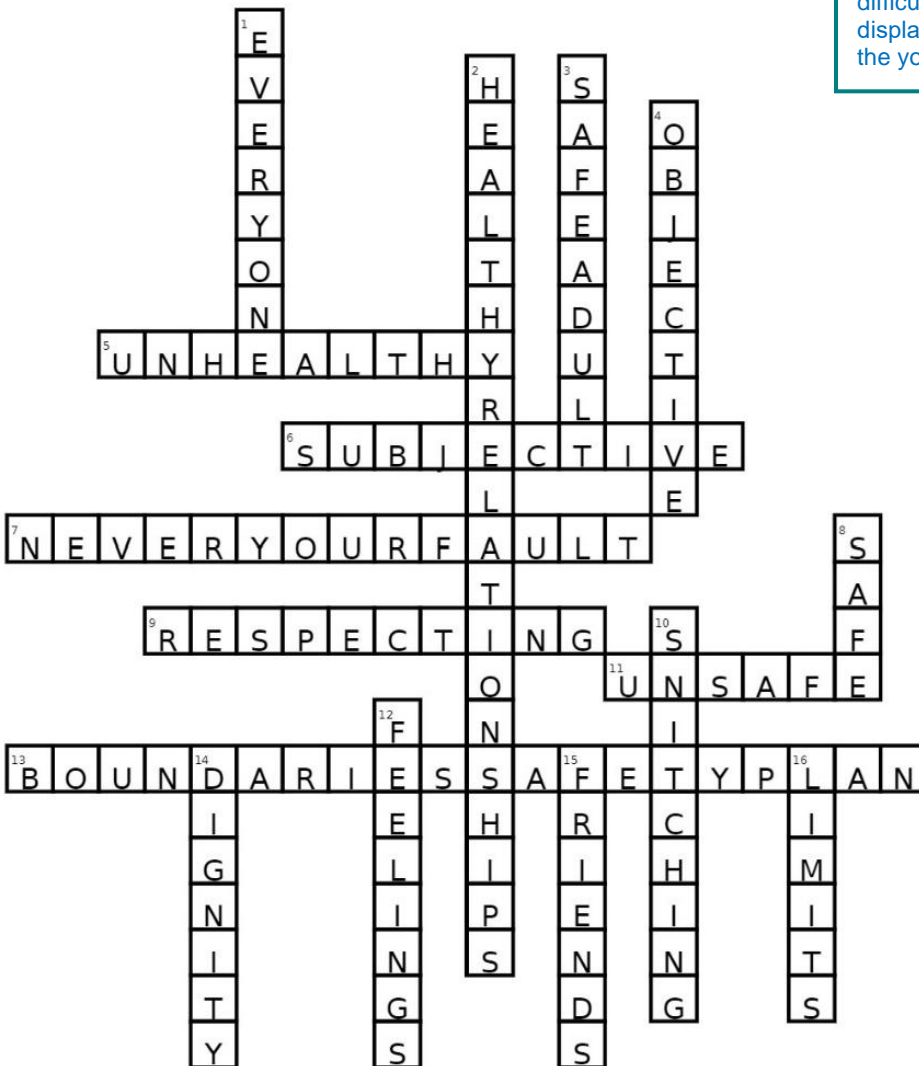
Note: If needed for the age group, the Lesson Leader may decide to write an answer key for the youth on the board for everyone to see.

Conclusion: After going through the crossword with the students, recap the following items:

- It's normal to have different emotions about different things.
- What can you do if you feel any of these because someone is either about to cross, or has crossed, your boundaries? Follow the safety plan:
 - Say "NO! I want you to stop that!"
 - Try to get away if you can.
 - Tell a safe adult

WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY:

Note: The Lesson Leader may lessen the difficulty of the crossword by writing / displaying a "word bank" on the board for the youth, shown below.



Text Box Answer Key:
 dignity
 boundaries safety plan
 safe adult
objective
 friends
 unsafe
 everyone
 respecting
 snitching
 feelings
 safe
 never your fault
 limits
 subjective
 unhealthy
 healthy relationships

ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Create an Emotions Superhero - Worksheet

Background: This activity begins with a discussion about healthy relationships, boundaries, and learning about emotions and feelings. This activity allows the youth to create their own Emotions Superhero who would be able to help other youth either get out of a situation where they felt angry, upset or confused, and what they could do about it.

Note: The worksheet template is included in the downloaded set of materials at the end of this packet.

Discussion: First, discuss the following with the students, defining emotions as the way we feel. **Emphasize:**

SUPPLIES

Writing utensils and colored pencils or markers
Printed copy of the *Create an Emotions Superhero Worksheet* for each student

- Emotions are OK. They aren't right or wrong, they just are.
- It's normal to have different emotions about different things.
- Sometimes when we feel unsafe, or uncomfortable or scared, our bodies might feel a certain way.
- Whenever we feel unsafe, uncomfortable or scared, It's OK to be really loud, to move our body in any way to show that we don't like what is happening, and that we want it to stop. Or that it's not OK.
- Our body might do one, or two, or all of these things!
- If our body starts to show us any of these reactions/feelings, then that is a sign that you feel unsafe, uncomfortable or scared.
- And, then safety plan. Try to get away, tell a safe adult.
- Not everybody feels like they can follow the safety plan. It might be you, or a friend. You might be hearing about this new information for the first time! In any case, it's important to tell a safe adult as soon as you can.

Sometimes, things might happen to us that might cause us to have physical feelings we don't like as much. We might feel uncomfortable, or "gross" inside, like we might be sick to our stomach or nauseous, or extremely sad. These physical feelings we have are telling our brain something—whether it is for something happy or for something wrong, uncomfortable or unsafe. Feeling uncomfortable or unsafe might feel like the following:

- Your body might want to take flight—wanting to run away or get away
- Your body might freeze—feeling like you can't move, like your body feels like concrete
- Your body might feel heavy or stuck
- Your body might want to strike out and hit something
- Your stomach might feel sick, like you want to throw up
- You might feel confusion—not knowing what to do, or understanding what is happening
- And, you might feel disconnected, like you're watching something happen to you—and maybe not even feeling it physically

Healthy relationships:

Respecting boundaries—we should have respect for ourselves, and respect for others. Respect for ourselves means we understand our dignity and value as a person, and work to create or maintain boundaries to protect ourselves. We feel upset or uncomfortable when someone doesn't honor our own boundaries, and we communicate with the right person if we need help. Respecting another's boundaries means you care about them, and won't do anything that would bring them harm, and that you communicate with the right person to get them help if they are being harmed by someone else.

Healthy relationships include elements include two individuals who are committed to: having mutual respect, freedom to be one's self, honoring each other's boundaries, and communicating in healthy ways.) For example, if a friend asks you to do something they feel is unsafe or they don't like, people who have healthy boundaries would stop that behavior immediately. People who truly care about you want you to be safe and feel safe will behave with respect toward you.

Relationships are unhealthy (even among peer friendships) when there isn't respect, when power is used to manipulate, name-calling, a lack of kindness, when there's dishonesty, when it hurts or is confusing, when someone tries to get you to do something you don't want to do, when there's abuse, etc.

Sometimes we are in relationships or friendships with others where something isn't quite right. You might feel taken advantage of, bullied—maybe even abused. Maybe someone else always has their way and you're the one who has to sacrifice what you want. Do you feel like you always know how to say "no?" Do your friendships make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or involve any of the "feelings" elements mentioned above? These are unhealthy relationships. It's important that we know how to stand up for ourselves in really tricky situations, and get help for ourselves and our friends when needed. We are going to talk about being *assertive*.

There's a lot of confusion regarding being assertive. Sometimes people think that being assertive is rude... Or that it's being aggressive. The truth is, regardless of whether we are shy or outgoing, or introverted or extroverted, or don't like conflict or love to argue, we should all be assertive! It's part of healthy boundaries, and all healthy relationships have healthy boundaries.

Being assertive doesn't mean that we have to be loud or annoying. It just means that we identify our feelings, note when something is not right, gather our courage and take the steps to communicate when we feel something unsafe needs attention for ourselves, and for our friends.

If you are experiencing any of the feelings we just discussed, sometimes, you might feel like you need a Superhero to get through it. The good news is that you can be your own Superhero! For this activity, you get to create your own "Emotions Superhero."

Activity:

After handing out copies of the provided comic book cover, have the youth each create their own "Emotions Superhero." The idea is to create a superhero whose special superpower is to help people when they are in a situation that makes them feel scared, angry, uncomfortable or confused.

Ask the youth to:

1. Draw an Emotions Superhero in the space provided on the sheet. They should:
 - a. Give their Superhero a name (to be placed in the caption box)
 - b. Specifically, what is their emotional superpower?
 - c. Do they have any other superpowers?
 - d. How does their power work?
 - e. How are they assertive?
 - f. How do they get information to a safe adult?
2. After creating their Superhero, ask the youth to share with the class information about their superhero. How would their Superhero help someone who is in a situation that makes them feel scared, angry, uncomfortable or confused, using a made-up scenario as an example (*feel free to pull scenarios from other lessons if your students feel stuck*)?

**ACTIVITY OPTION #5 NetSmartz Video: "Split Decisions"**

Background: This short video is shared with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and can be played for youth. It is designed to open a simple discussion with youth about cyberbullying and alternate ways they can work through issues.

SUPPLIES

A/V equipment outfitted with Internet access

Preparation: Internet access and video playing are parts of this activity and should be queued up in advance. It's also possible to download the videos from the NETSMARTZ website.

Description: In "Split Decisions," Lily and Gabriela aren't getting along, on- or offline. They each have to make choices on how they will interact with one another both in person and online.

Click here for the video link and then look through the videos under Middle and High School to find "Split Decisions:" <https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/videos#middleandhighschool>

Discussion: Before showing the video, ask the students, "How would you feel if someone said something mean to you, or about you, online?"

Say: "Sometimes these things can happen when we are online, when talking to others, using social media, playing games, or any other online activity. If it does happen, there's a really important safety plan that we need to know about—and we're going to talk about it after watching this video."

After the video, ask "How do you think each student felt, physically and emotionally, when their friend said something mean about them online? What should they do?"

Let's also discuss what we should do when we feel upset, confused, scared, upset, or angry about something that we see online, or regarding something unkind or mean that someone says or writes to us when online, while playing a game or just simply watching videos. Here are the options we can do when something upsets us online:

- Block the person
- Report any cyberbullying to the website or app.
- You can also save the message or visual, and show it to a safe adult.
- Always bring safe adults into the conversation when you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or when you know something isn't right—there are lots of safe adults in your life!

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 I may be in a situation where I feel hurt, scared or confused. If that happens, please give me the courage to follow the safety rules by getting away and telling a safe adult. Thank you for loving me and for giving me safe adults and parents who want to keep me safe and happy.

Amen