

Elementary 5: Sexual Assault

Lesson 1: Setting Boundaries and Dealing with Sexual Harassment

Aim/Rationale

Students will be able to define their personal boundaries. They will identify sexual comments and behaviours that they feel uncomfortable with, understand the importance of consent and respect for others' boundaries, and brainstorm strategies to respond to unwanted comments and physical contact as well as to communicate appropriately.

Learning Content

Learning Content in Sexuality Education

- 1) Identify different sexual harassment situations in reality and cyberspace
- 2) Develop strategies under different circumstances to react to sexual harassment

Cross-Curricular Competencies

- 1) To solve problems
- 2) To cooperate with others
- 3) To communicate appropriately

Purpose

Children in grade 5 have increasing independence, and come into contact with a wide variety of people and environments. This lesson is designed to empower students to define their personal boundaries with people they may encounter in their lives, and hence raise their awareness of when their personal boundaries are being crossed. This will help them develop the ability to identify situations that involve sexual harassment or assault and to react to them with different strategies. As children of this age are increasingly independent online as well as in their day to day life, this lesson also intends to help them identify and respond to incidences of sexual harassment on the internet. Additionally, this lesson stresses the importance of students being responsible for their behaviours and showing respect to others.

Relevant to:

- Preventing sexual assault
- Preventing violence

Lesson

Materials

1. My Boundaries handout (one for each student)
2. A large roll of paper for group activities
3. Markers
4. Sexual Harassment Myth & Fact handout (one for each student)
5. A blackboard, whiteboard, or Smartboard

Essential Questions

- What does, “boundary” mean when talking about communication? What about when it comes to physical touching?
- What is sexual harassment?
- What is online sexual harassment?
- How can a person deal with sexual harassment in different situations?

Establishing an Inclusive Classroom

To establish a respectful and inclusive atmosphere in the classroom, you can to make a disclaimer a day before the class so that students can prepare mentally for the topic. Tell students, “Tomorrow we will be discussing a serious topic that can be hard for some people to discuss. It is about how to recognize sexual harassment and how to take actions against it. It can be a sensitive topic and could affect any of us on a personal level. As such, please remember to be very respectful and aware of what you are saying throughout our discussion tomorrow.”

You can also check in with yourself and consider any myths about sexual harassment you personally could have before the class begins, such as a victim-blaming attitude, assumptions about the gender

of the person who is perpetrating sexual harassment or being sexually harassed, etc. Avoiding making assumptions about what sexual harassment is or who is affected can help avoid alienating students and be more representative of what they may experience.

Terms

- Sexual harassment
- Responsibility
- Boundary

Development [50 minutes]

1. Start the class by writing down the word “boundary” on the board and asking students if they know what the word means. Tell students that a boundary is a line. It can be a physical line like the national boundary between Canada and the United States or the boundary of our school grounds. Boundaries can also be unseen. They can be personal limits about what you will or won’t accept. Crossing these boundaries can make you or other people feel uncomfortable or upset.
 - a. Give a copy of the My Boundaries handout to each student and ask them to fill in the sheets.
 - b. Pair students up and have them share their answers with their partner. Tell students that it’s okay to have different answers.
 - c. Tell the students that the worksheet was to help categorize the people by the degree of closeness with and trust in that they have for them. Explain to the students that we all have our “circles” for people we encounter in our life. Some friends belong to the “smile and nod circle” while some are in the “hug” one. Sometimes people can move from one circle to another when you get more familiar and comfortable with each other. For example, you and your best friends were probably not very familiar with each other when you first met. It took time for you to get to know each other and move from the “smile and nod circle” to the “hug circle”. You can give a person permission to move from one circle to another but you need to get permission from that person too. Without permission, it is not ok to cross boundaries.
 - d. Ask students to imagine someone held their hand when they should have stayed in the, “smile and hello” zone. How would you feel, think and react? Encourage students to think and share.
 - e. Conclude that we have the right to ask the person to go back to the circle they belong in and not to cross the boundary. We also have the responsibility to try to not cross other people’s boundaries.
2. Write down the words “sexual harassment” on the board. Tell students that sexual harassment is something that seriously crosses another person’s boundaries. To harass means to tease, to annoy and to bother others. Sexual harassment is any behaviour that is sexual and unwanted by the other person. Unwanted is the most important word in the definition.
 - a. Ask students if:
 - i. A person can sexually harass another person of the same gender?

- ii. A person can sexually harass another person of a different gender?
 - iii. A younger person can sexually harass an older person?
 - iv. An older person can sexually harass a younger person?
- b. Explain that ANYONE can be sexually harassed and ANYONE can potentially sexually harass someone else. So everyone should be careful to not to cross others' boundaries, and should take action when their own boundaries are crossed.
3. Read students the following scenario: Frankie and Leila are classmates. During a soccer game, Frankie notices that Leila is wearing a bra and shouts, "Leila's wearing a bra!!!" Leila immediately looks flustered and shouts back, "Shut up Frankie!" and runs away to get back to the game. Later on that day, when Leila is in class sitting in front of Frankie, Frankie reaches over and snaps Leila's bra strap. Leila is furious and embarrassed and storms out of the classroom in tears.
- a. Divide students into groups of 4 or 5. Write the questions below on the board. Give each group a large paper and markers to write down their responses to the questions. Optionally, ask students to act out responses to questions 3, 4, and 5. For example, before playing out question 3, divide students into small groups of 3-4, have them brainstorm about what Frankie could have done differently and how Leila would react to it. Have a student play Frankie and another play Leila and act the scenarios out for the class.
- Question 1:** Did Frankie cross Leila's personal boundaries? If yes, how?
Suggested answer: When Frankie drew attention to Leila's bra during gym class and when Frankie snapped Leila's bra, he was crossing Leila's boundaries. This was not okay.
- Question 2:** Do you think it is Leila's fault for wearing a bra and having it show?
Suggested answer: It's not Leila's fault at all. Leila has the right to choose what to wear.
- Question 3:** What could Frankie have done differently? For example, what could Frankie have done after Leila told him to shut up?
Suggested answers: Frankie could have listened to Leila and stopped after she first told him to. He could have chosen to not bother her again about it, apologize to Leila, and realize that he crossed her boundaries
- Question 4:** Leila said, "Shut up Frankie!" during gym class and ran out of the classroom when Frankie snapped her bra. What else could Leila have done?
Suggested answers: Told Frankie that his actions were making her feel angry and embarrassed and that he should stop because it was really hurtful; told a teacher; told a trusted adult.
- Question 5:** If you were Leila's friend and witnessed what happened, what could you do?
Suggested answers: Stop Frankie and tell him that what he's doing is mean and crossing personal boundaries; comfort and support Leila; tell Leila that it's not her fault at all, tell a teacher or trusted adult.
4. Conclude that sexual harassment is never the fault of the person who experiences it. Blaming the person who is sexually harassed hurts them again. It's important to support people like Leila and help them feel better. We can always talk to the person if they want to talk, and

we can ask a teacher, school counsellor, school nurse, parent, or other trusted adults for help. We should bear in mind that everyone has the right to refuse unwanted words and touching; everyone has the responsibility to behave respectfully and not cross others' boundaries.

5. Read students the following scenario: Alex is just starting grade 5. He is outgoing, always smiling and friendly, and he has a lot of friends. However, one day when he was playing an online video game where players could talk with each other via headsets, one of them said to him, "Hahaha, oh wow, you sure have a gay voice." Shocked, Alex left the game immediately. He couldn't help thinking about it after that, although he didn't know what to do. Feeling embarrassed and frustrated, Alex never played that game again. He even started to avoid speaking in public, and his grades slowly started to go down because he was too self-conscious to participate or talk with other students.
 - a. Ask students if they would consider this sexual harassment. Is it different because it's happening online with people that Alex doesn't know in real life?
 - b. Divide students into groups of 4 or 5. Encourage them to brainstorm how Alex might feel and what he could do.
 - c. Have each group share their solutions to the class, and have the class judge their suggestions by applauding - the better they think the solution is, the harder they should applaud. If they don't like a solution, ask them to specify the reasons and discuss it with the whole class.
 - d. Confirm that what Alex has suffered is online sexual harassment. Tell students this kind of sexual harassment often does not hurt someone physically, but still can have a strong negative impact on them psychologically.
 - e. Conclude with some suggestions to deal with online sexual harassment. These include saving the evidence and reporting it in game or on the game's website or school, talking to trusted friends and adults, and reminding yourself that it's not your fault.

Culmination [40 minutes]

1. Divide students up into pairs. Assign each pair one of the following scenarios. Tell them to rehearse it and prepare to act it out in front of the class. They should create and act out a dialogue between the two characters in their scenario
 - Scenario 1: After Frankie snaps Leila's bra strap, he sees her again and shouts, "Leila, so you are wearing a bra again?!?" This time, Leila decides to speak up for herself.
 - Scenario 2: Taylor sees Frankie has snapped Leila's bra strap. Knowing it's not right, Taylor decides to talk about this with Frankie as his friend. Taylor wants Frankie to realize what he has done and reflect on it.
 - Scenario 3. Lila is Leila's older sister. She heard what happens between Leila and Frankie, and tries to talk to Leila and support her. But Leila doesn't want their parents know what has happened. She wants Lila to keep it secret. Lila is thinking about what she can do to make Leila feels better, while also hesitant if she should tell their parents.

2. Create a “stage” area in classroom, and make sure all students as audience are facing the stage. Grab chairs or other simple props if necessary and ask the pairs to act out their scenarios.
3. After each role play, debrief by asking some questions. For instance, ask those who acted How did it feel to say____? How did it feel when the other person said____? Ask the audience what they observed. How did Leila set up a boundary? What worked? How did Taylor approach Frankie? How did Frankie react? What were the things that Lila did to support her sister Leila?
4. If someone feels strongly that a scenario could have been handled differently, invite them to try acting out the same scenario. It can be helpful and thought-provoking for students to see a variety of ways to set boundaries, reflect, and support each other.

Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Establish their boundaries for personal communication and touch;
- Identify sexual harassment and recognize different types of sexual harassment;
- Identify ways to support those who experience sexual harassment;
- Be aware of their responsibility for their actions and the importance of respecting others’ personal boundaries

Assessment Ideas

1. Give each student a Sexual Harassment Myths and Facts handout.
 - a. Give students 5 minutes to read and answer the statements answers.
 - b. Go over the sheet with the class. Ask students to vote for each one: was it a fact or a myth? Ask students in each group to give their reasons. Then go over the right answer with the answer key.



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