

Lesson 3 for Grades K, 1 & 2

Boundaries: You Have Rights!

PRINCIPLE

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

OBJECTIVES

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

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

CATECHISM / SCRIPTURE

Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1738 (1997)

Background for Lesson Leaders:

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

While adults are the chief protectors of children, there are still ways we can teach children to better protect themselves when faced with tough situations. Personal boundaries are established during our early years, and adults must help children to create their own proper boundaries and respect the ones that are in place—understanding that children will model adult behavior. Some boundaries are “non-negotiables” for children (such as touching/physical boundaries), but others are unique and are impacted based on the youth’s individual perceptions, personal history, values, goals, culture and concerns.

Using our voice, and the word “no” are effective ways to establish a boundary. Sometimes children may not be aware they’re allowed to say “no” to an adult or older youth.

Most people will accept and respect our boundaries if we are clear about them. But, with some people, we must frequently and clearly uphold and reset our boundaries.

Children may have difficulty with this concept at this age. They can see boundaries in a very literal and visual way (such as a fence around a yard), but they can also learn that words create boundaries. One boundary is created if, for example, a child says, “I don’t need any help. I can do it myself.” Some other words and phrases that can create boundaries for children are “no,” “don’t do that,” “give me five” (instead of a hug), and “leave me alone.” Obviously, when you think about it, there are many examples of using words to create boundaries. By using as many examples as possible, you can help young children begin to develop an understanding of the more abstract meaning of the term boundary—and, obviously, that abstract meaning is most germane to helping children learn to protect themselves from sexual abuse.

This age group: Dealing with the primary age—key concept is “activity”

Young children have lively and vivid imaginations, are growing less self-centered, and are becoming more conscious of others. Their attention span is short—approximately 20 minutes. They build on concrete experiences, love to learn, and are highly inquisitive. However, they rely almost entirely on others to define good and bad, and safe versus unsafe behavior—but they do understand “rules”, which is another phrase for boundaries. At this age, children are beginning to differentiate between the positive and negative aspects of everyday life. They are beginning to question adults’ expectations of blind obedience. At the same time they are learning how to respect and care for their own bodies in terms of hygiene, eating, and activity. Parents and caring adults should make every effort to create an environment with honesty and trust, where children are free to ask questions about life and their own bodies to set the stage for each child’s life-long relationships with others. This is the time to discuss safe and unsafe behaviors, and to enable children to practice safety away from home.

ACTIVITY OPTION #1: Play the (optional) introductory video as an icebreaker

The introductory video for children and youth in this age range is designed to open a simple discussion about personal boundary safety. The video is brief and 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 the critical components needed to teach children and youth how to protect themselves. They learn best by "doing"; not just listening.

ACTIVITY OPTION #2: Review and discuss key vocabulary words

- **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 child 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 children, "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 child and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a child and a teacher or coach.
- **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 children 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 children know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell children that it's wrong for an adult or another child to ask a child 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 child keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the child must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the child will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of "telling".]

ACTIVITY OPTION #3: Life is like a box of cereal—Discovering the boundaries in your life

Activity: The purpose of this activity is to create scenarios for children that will give them ideas about boundaries and limits, and how both are an important part of our daily lives. You'll be inviting the children to stand in a circle with you while holding hands with each other. Then, together, you'll sing the introductory song prayer. Afterward, everyone will sit down in the same circle shape, and the you'll lead the discussion about boundaries.

Discussion: Begin the lesson by inviting all of the children to gather into a circle around you. Ask them to hold hands with one another and let them know you're all going to begin with a song of prayer. Tell the children that you're going to sing a line of a prayer, and ask them to sing the lyric after you. The song should be sung to the tune of "Are you sleeping?" (the *Frère Jacques* song).

SUPPLIES

1 box of cereal
Plastic grocery store bag

Lesson Leader: *God, our Father,*
Lesson Leader: *We thank you,*
Lesson Leader: *For our friends and family,*
Lesson Leader: *Amen.*

Children repeat: *God, our Father,*
Children repeat: *We thank you,*
Children repeat: *For our friends and family,*
Children repeat: *Amen.*

Upon completion, ask the children to sit in a circle with you (you're seated in a chair at the top of the circle—this is in and of itself a boundary that you're placing about appropriate distance). Begin a conversation with the children about boundaries by asking them if they know what a “boundary” is, and have them explain it from their perspective.

Then ask the children to think about the rules they have at home. For example:

- Where are you allowed to eat food in your house? Why?
- What time is bedtime on a school night? What about weekends? (If they're different, why are they different?)
- When do you finish your homework? Are there other things you're not allowed to do until your homework is finished?
- Are animals allowed inside your house? If so, when and in which rooms?
- Are you allowed to play outside when it's raining? If you are, do you have to wear special clothes? If you aren't allowed, why not?
- Are you allowed to eat dessert before you eat dinner? Why not?
- Do you wear a seatbelt or sit in a special seat when you're riding in a car? Why?

Note: When children provide different answers based on their own experience, this is helpful for the other children to see that boundaries and rules are different in different households, but that they should still be respected.

Explain: Each of these “rules” that we just talked about establishes a boundary. Talk with the children about these boundaries or limits and the fact that everyone has them, including adults. Some are rules that are given to us by others—like our parents, teachers or coaches. But, sometimes, we get to choose our own boundaries. Ask the children if they can think of any ways that they have created boundaries or rules for the people in their lives. Some examples are:

- When you don't want a hug from someone like a friend, parent, grandparent or other family member, or don't want to give a goodnight kiss.
- When someone wants to use your toys and you don't want the other person to do that.
- When you want to give yourself a bath on your own.
- When you want to pick out your own clothes without help from mom or dad.
- Thinking back to your younger years, when you wanted to feed yourself rather than mom/dad feeding you by hand (like a baby).

Explain that boundaries or limits sometimes seem like “no fun” because they seem like they are getting in the way of what we really want to do. However, boundaries can also protect us from harm. They help us know when something or someone is not acting in a way that is healthy and good for us.

Visual display: Children are very visual at this age. One way to demonstrate the effect of boundaries is by using a box of cereal. Remove half the cereal from the box and pour it into a large plastic bag.

Show the children how the box demonstrates well-formed boundaries that keep the cereal inside and other things outside. The box fits in a particular space and does not allow the cereal to spill out into other areas. Meanwhile, the bag of cereal has no definite form. It is hard to hold onto and the cereal can spill out unexpectedly and become contaminated by other things in or on the cabinet or table.

This is what boundaries do. Like boxes, they define the space that keeps things safe and predictable. They also let us know what is expected of children and adults, and that children have the same rights as adults to have their personal boundaries respected. And while weak boundaries—like the bag of cereal—are not always the best way to protect something, strong boundaries—like the box—provide a much better way to protect something.

ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Boundaries—Coloring pages

Activity: Children will have an opportunity to color pictures that describe personal boundaries and explain what to do when someone violates their own personal boundaries.

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

Preparation: The coloring pages for Lesson 3 are used to illustrate the concept of “boundaries.” The first set of coloring pictures show a more literal meaning of the ideas surrounding boundaries. The second set of coloring pictures incorporates more abstract concepts.

SUPPLIES

Crayons
Colored pencils
Pre-printed lesson pages for coloring

Assess the amount of time you have available for this exercise to allow your students to color at least one of the literal coloring pages and one of the abstract coloring pages. Use the “literal” coloring pages to start your students talking about boundaries. Then, use the “abstract” coloring pages to help your students understand that boundaries sometimes include things you can’t see—things such as rules.

Directions: Review the handouts to familiarize yourself with them. Then, distribute the appropriate handouts to your students and ask them the questions below.

“Literal” coloring-page examples of boundaries:

*Boundaries:
carseat / straps / seatbelt*



Boundaries: fences



Boundary: sandbox walls

“Abstract” coloring-page examples of boundaries:

Boundary: bedtime rules



*Boundary: rules involving
dinner and desserts*



Boundary: playing outside

Discussion: Tell the children that the “Literal” boundaries are easy to understand because they are the things that provide limits, versus the “abstract” boundaries, which are typically involving rules and preferences. The following are questions to ask the children as they color the pages:

1. What are the boundaries in each of the photos?
2. Which of the boundary examples involve safety?
3. How do the boundaries work to protect either the person, or the material?
4. Are they all strong boundaries?
5. Could any of the boundaries be stronger? How so?

3. What are some activities that need additional safety precautions?

bicycling
skateboarding

rollerblading
crossing the street

football
driving / riding in car

4. What are some examples of safety lessons and rules that we follow to be safe when we are in the car?

following the speed limit

stopping at stop signs

following traffic light rules

5. What are some examples of safety lessons and rules that we follow to be safe when we are walking outside or playing sports?

walking on the crosswalk
wearing helmets / knee pads

looking both ways to cross
following game rules

holding hands to cross

6. What are some examples of safety lessons and rules that we follow to be safe when we are out in the sun?

wearing a hat
using sunblock

using a sun umbrella

wearing sunglasses

7. Which images show that a boundary has been placed to create a safer environment for themselves?

castle with moat
locks in doors

barbed wire fence

walls

8. What images show what we do to help uphold and respect others' boundaries? And, how do they work? (Hint: sometimes the things that we do to protect ourselves can also be the things that we do to help protect others!)

stop at stop signs
don't park in special needs parking spots

drive extra carefully around "men at work" signs
drive extra carefully around "children crossing" signs

For the next section, ask the children to look more closely at the castle, and describe this scenario to them. The picture you see is a private castle. It's owned by someone, and no one else is allowed to go in there without special permission of the owner.

Ask these follow-up questions, then continue the discussion:

- How has the owner of the castle placed a boundary to protect himself? **Answer:** *The owner has placed a moat around the castle.*
- And what does that boundary of a "moat" do? **Answer:** *the moat gives the castle more personal space, like a force field you CAN see. Also, the moat and extra space protect the castle from harm. The owner of the castle also knows that the moat is there, so if anything comes into the water, the owner knows what to do to respond.*
- What does the castle have to do in order to uphold the boundary of the moat? **Answer:** *The owner of the castle has to be diligent and always ensure that it has water in the moat, for the moat to work as a protective boundary from harm.*
- What if someone does breach the boundary of the moat to get to the castle? **Answer:** *The owner has to take more protective measures and talk right away to someone who can help.*

Explain the following point to children to help transition to action items for question #9:

We are like the owners of the castle with the boundary of the moat. Except, we are the owners of our bodies, though, instead of a castle. And instead of the boundary of the moat, we have our own personal space—like a forcefield that you CAN'T see. So what are ways that we can protect ourselves, if someone tries to violate our personal safety rules, like when someone tried to go through the castle's moat?

Now proceed to ask them about the answer to #9 on their worksheets:

9. What can you do if someone makes you feel uncomfortable, violates your boundaries, doesn't listen to you when you stay to stop, or is hurting someone else?

tell a safe adult right away

say: "No!"

say: "I don't like that, please stop"

try to leave the situation to get help

say: "leave me alone!"

say: "don't touch me there, my body belongs to me"

Concluding statements: You're the boss of you! We can't control others, but we can try to protect ourselves by doing and saying specific things to set a boundary, and get help right away if something scary or bad happens.

If you're in a situation where you don't feel right, or you feel scared or uncomfortable, or nervous, anxious, humiliating or embarrassing, listen to your intuition! If someone is asking you to do something you don't like, it is ALWAYS OK to say "no."

ACTIVITY OPTION #6: Netsmartz "It's OK to Tell" video: Be safe online and offline, too!

Background: This 8-minute video is shared with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and can be played for children as part of an activity to help them understand it's "OK to tell" when feeling uncomfortable, sad, scared or confused. It is designed to open a simple discussion with children about boundaries and safety.

Description: Watch Clicky, Nettie and Webster race to stop Look-At-Dis Louie from spreading bad pictures online. But they better get to him fast, before he turns the whole town gray!

Click here for the link: <https://www.netsmartz.org/NetSmartzKids/ItsOkToTell>

End the lesson with a prayer

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

Dear God,

Sometimes when things happen, I get scared. Sometimes I just get mixed up—like when a person I care about does something that makes me feel uncomfortable or scared. When that happens, help me remember that I am special and give me courage to tell an adult what happened. Thank you for loving me and for giving me safe adults and parents who want to keep me safe and happy.

Amen

ACTIVITY OPTION #4: Boundaries Coloring Pages

Instructions: Color the page and discuss the boundaries with the Lesson Leader.



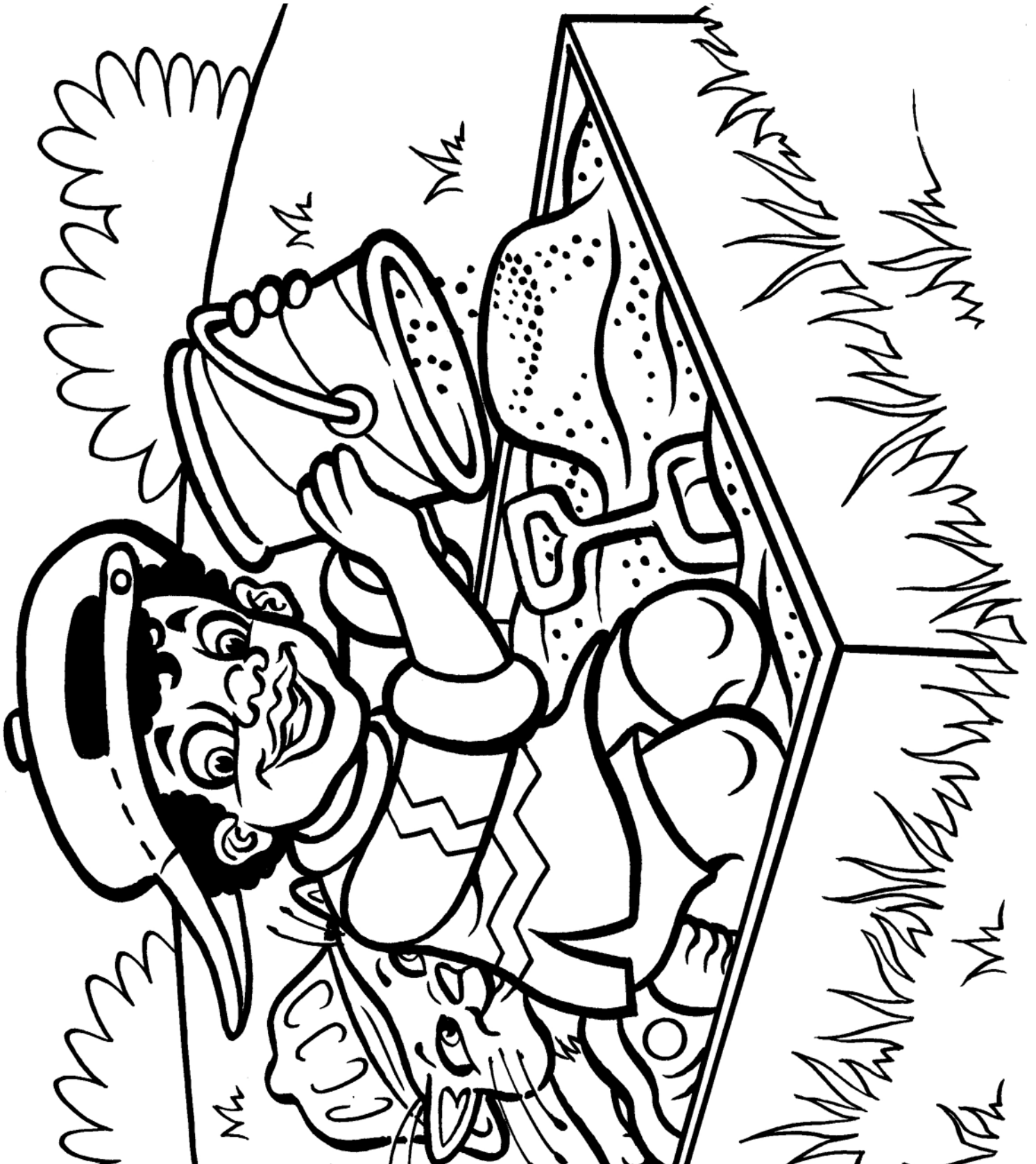
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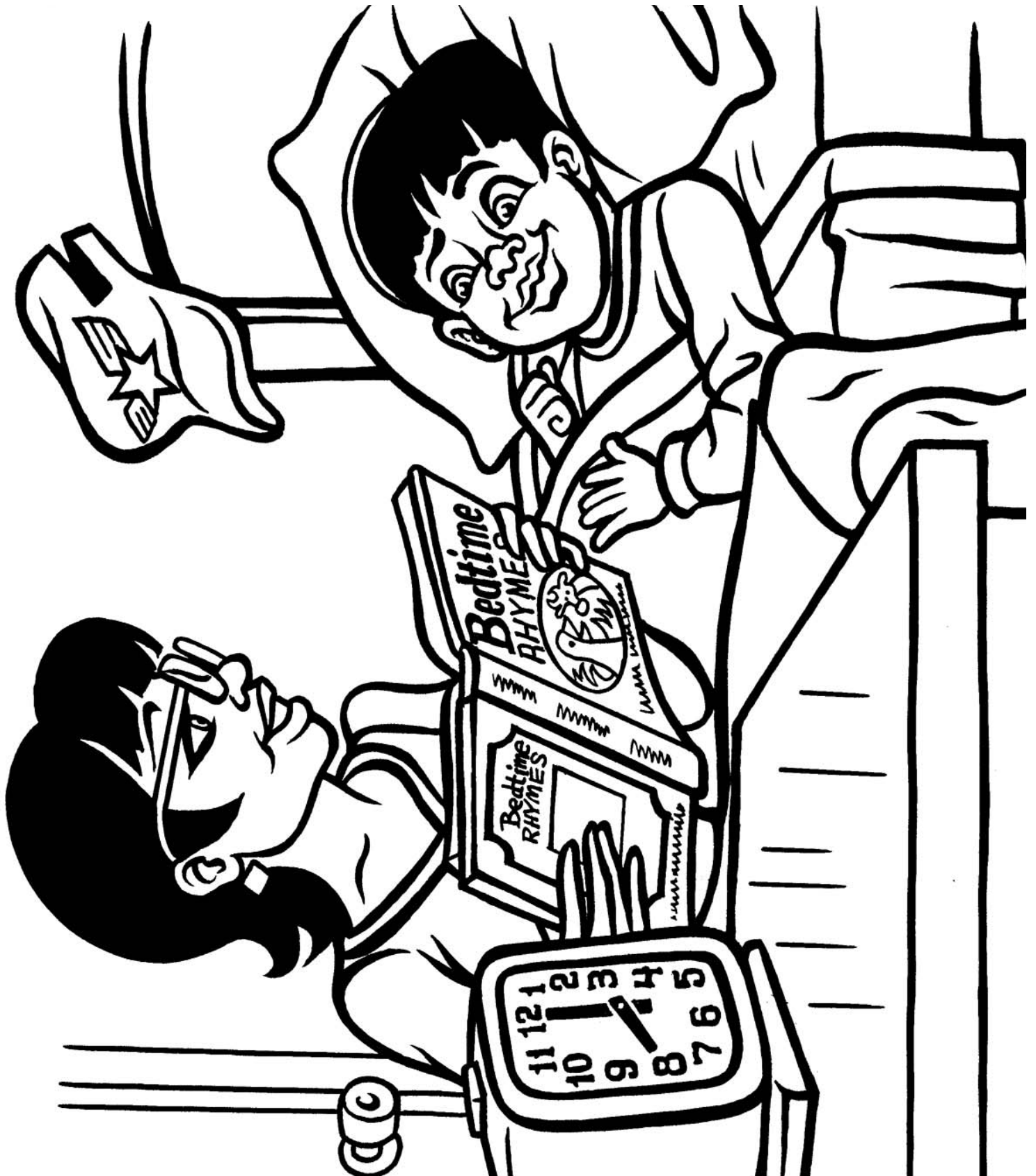
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ACTIVITY OPTION #5: What is this Boundary? (cont.)

Questions:

1. What are examples of typical safety lessons that we have to know about to be safe?

2. Which images could illustrate the boundary of “leave me alone” or “don’t touch me?”

3. What are some activities that need additional safety precautions?

4. What are some examples of safety lessons and rules that we follow to be safe when we are in the car?

5. What are some examples of safety lessons and rules that we follow to be safe when we are walking outside or playing sports?

6. What are some examples of safety lessons and rules that we follow to be safe when we are out in the sun?

7. Which images show that a boundary has been placed to create a safer environment for themselves?

8. What images show what we do to help uphold and respect others’ boundaries? And, how? (Hint: sometimes the things that we do to protect ourselves can also be the things that we do to help protect others!)

9. What can you do if someone makes you feel uncomfortable, violates your boundaries, doesn’t listen to you when you say to stop, or is hurting someone else?

