



Drawing a line

How do teachers define boundaries when dealing with emotions in the classroom? How do teachers make decisions regarding boundaries? What issues do teachers typically have difficulty with?

Ask yourself ...

To decide where to draw the line, try asking yourself:

- Am I doing and saying the right thing?
- How would I feel if another teacher could hear what I were saying?
- Should I discuss this with someone else?
- What am I happy disclosing about myself to students?

It might be helpful to list your no-go zones.

Strategies for difficult or challenging comments

1. Refer back to the [ground rules](#) that have been set up in your respectful relationships education classroom. You can use the ground rules to say:

“ We agreed at the start of this topic that there would be no personal questions, so I’m going to pass on that question.

or

The rule about no personal questions applies to both you and to me.

2. It’s OK to state that something is outside of the boundaries:

“ That comment is inappropriate in this classroom.

3. Think ahead about the types of comments the lesson might produce and prepare a response that you are happy with.

4. When sharing personal stories, make sure they remain purposeful and appropriate. Everything should help illustrate a lesson you are trying to teach. You need to know where to stop.
5. Hold up your hand in the stop gesture or shake your head to indicate no and say directly:

“ Let me stop you for a minute to clarify the boundaries of our relationship as a teacher and student.
6. Build in teaching activities that address boundaries. All structured scope and sequence respectful relationships education programs have lesson plans that assist students in identifying and protecting their personal boundaries.
7. If you feel confident, you can use an inappropriate question or comment as a teachable moment. You can ask the students what an assertive, aggressive or passive response would be to close down an unwelcome or inappropriate comment. There is risk attached to this strategy, however.

Read more about this topic

- [Boundary dilemmas in teacher–student relationships: Struggling with ‘the line’](#)

Codes of conduct

ACT

- [Teachers’ code of professional practice](#)

New South Wales

- [Department of Education code of conduct](#)

Northern Territory

- [Professional boundaries guidelines](#)

Queensland

- [Professional boundaries](#)

South Australia

- [Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people](#)

Tasmania

- [Professional boundaries](#)

Victoria

- [Teacher conduct and suitability](#)

Western Australia

- [Teacher - Student professional boundaries](#)