

# Jo's guide for parents

Teaching your child about boundaries



# 1. Use simple concepts

Explain what boundaries are in a way your child can understand.

"Boundaries are like invisible lines that show how we want to be treated. They help us feel safe and comfortable."

"Think of boundaries like traffic lights. A green light means 'go'—it's okay to do something. A yellow light means 'slow down'—we need to be careful. A red light means 'stop'—it's not okay to do that. Boundaries help us know when to go, slow down, or stop."

"Imagine you have a big bubble around you. This bubble is your personal space. You get to decide who can come into your bubble and when. It's okay to ask people to stay out of your bubble if you don't want them there."



## 2. Use everyday examples

Relate the idea of boundaries to situations your child encounters daily.

Examples:

"If you don't feel like giving a hug or kiss, it's okay to say 'no.' Everyone should respect your boundary about physical touch."

"If you're building a block tower and don't want anyone to knock it over, you can tell your friends to be careful around it. That's setting a boundary."

"When you're sitting in your special chair, you don't want anyone else to sit there without asking. This is your personal space, just like other people have their own spaces too."

# 3. Talk about sharing feelings

Discuss emotional boundaries and when it's okay to share or keep feelings private.

Examples:

"If you're feeling sad, you can tell your parent or caretaker. But if you don't want to share with everyone, that's okay too."



"If you're feeling angry because something didn't go your way, you can talk to a trusted adult about it. But if you don't want to talk about it with your friends right away, that's okay too."

# 4. Practice saying 'no'

Empower your child to set their own boundaries.

**Example:**

"If someone wants to hug you and you don't feel like it, it's okay to say, 'No, thank you.' You have the right to decide what makes you comfortable."

And remember that it's okay to change your mind. At first you might want to hug someone but you can change your mind at any time.

Practice saying these phrases out loud:

- No.
- Stop.
- No, thank you.
- I don't like that
- I don't want that.
- I feel uncomfortable.
- Maybe another time.
- Don't do that, please.




# 5. Role-playing scenarios

Use role-playing to practice setting and respecting boundaries.


## Examples:

"Let's pretend someone asks to play with your toy. How would you tell them if you're not ready to share?"




"Let's pretend an aunt or uncle wants to give you a big hug but you don't feel like hugging. How would you tell them you'd prefer a high-five or a wave instead?"

"Let's pretend your friends want to play a game you don't like. How would you tell them you'd prefer to play something else?"



"Let's pretend a friend gets too close and it makes you uncomfortable. How would you ask them to give you more space?"



"Let's pretend your sibling wants to come into your room but you want some alone time. How would you tell them you need privacy?"

# 6. Reinforce Respecting Others' Boundaries

Teach your child to recognize and respect the boundaries of others.

"Just like you have your own boundaries, other people have theirs too."

## Examples:

"If a friend says they don't want to play a game, we should listen and respect that."



"You could ask if they don't want to play at all or if they want to play another game."

"If someone says they need some time alone, it's important to give them space, just like you sometimes need your own time to think or play by yourself."

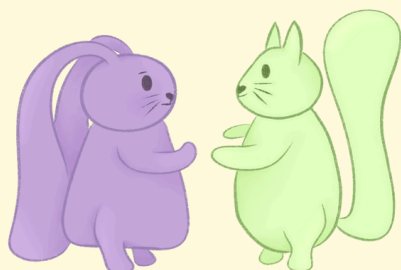


"You can tell them that you understand and give them some space."

"When you're playing a game and someone says 'stop,' it's important to stop right away. Everyone should feel safe and comfortable."



"You can ask them if they are okay and if they want to share why they said 'stop'. You could offer to play another game they might enjoy more."



# 7. Encourage open communication

Create an environment where your child feels safe to talk about their boundaries.

## Active listening

When your child comes to you with a concern, give them your full attention. Put away distractions like your phone or TV, and make eye contact. Show them that their thoughts and feelings are important to you.

## Modeling communication

Share your own boundaries and feelings in an age-appropriate way. This demonstrates that it's okay to talk about these topics.



## Open-ended questions

Ask questions that encourage more than just a yes or no response. This invites your child to express themselves more fully.

## Validate their feelings

When your child shares something with you, validate their feelings and experiences. Avoid dismissing or minimizing their concerns.

## Safe environment

Create a safe and non-judgmental space for your child to share. Reassure them that they won't get in trouble for being honest.

## Regular check-ins

Make it a habit to check in with your child about their day and their feelings. This can help them feel comfortable sharing more sensitive topics when they arise.