

Navigating Boundaries in Difficult Relationships

Lesson Objective:

Students will learn how to recognize when boundaries are needed, set healthy boundaries, and reflect on how boundaries affect relationships using the S.T.A.R. strategy.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 19: Navigating Boundaries in Difficult Relationships
- Paper and pencils
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Boundary Reflection Journal Worksheet
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Briefly discuss the concept of what a boundary is.

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- “Today, we’ll explore a very important part of relationships, setting boundaries. Boundaries help us show others what’s okay and what’s not okay for us. They’re not about being mean but about being clear and respectful.”

Discussion Starter

- “What are boundaries, and why do you think we need them?”
- “Can you think of a time when someone crossed a boundary of yours? How did it make you feel?”

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 19 aloud.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

Prepare the Children for the Story:

- “Now let’s read a chapter from *The Star Squad: Navigating Fifth Grade Adventures*. “While we read, pay attention to how the friends in the story navigate their relationship with Trevor. Notice how they use the S.T.A.R. strategy to figure out when and how to set boundaries.”

(Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments.

While reading, pause during key moments.

Ask Questions:

- What makes interacting with Trevor challenging for the group?
- Why do the friends feel uncomfortable when they don’t speak up?
- What kinds of boundaries do the characters consider setting with Trevor?
- How does Bennie’s response to Trevor’s teasing show he’s setting a boundary?
- Why does Buzz choose to move seats instead of responding to Trevor directly?
- How do the characters feel after they successfully set boundaries?
- What does Ollie mean when he says boundaries teach others how to treat us?
- Why do friends feel more confident after setting boundaries?
- How do the characters balance being kind with being firm?
- What role does reflection play in maintaining healthy boundaries?

Chapter 19: Navigating Boundaries in Difficult Relationships

As March continued, the friends noticed that not all relationships were easy to navigate. While they were close as a group, there were other students at school with whom they found it difficult to get along. One student in particular, Trevor, often made comments that were unkind or teased people about things they were sensitive about.

Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, Betty, and Maya wanted to be friendly toward everyone, but interacting with Trevor often left them feeling frustrated and uncomfortable. They realized they needed to find a way to manage their relationship with him while still maintaining healthy boundaries.

Understanding Boundaries

One afternoon, the friends gathered at Harriet's house after school to talk about the situation. "I don't want to be mean to Trevor," Harriet said, "but I don't like the way he treats people sometimes. It's hard to know how to respond."

Ollie thought about what Mr. Jenkins had said in class recently about boundaries. "Boundaries aren't just about keeping people out," he said. "They're about knowing what's okay and what's not okay for us, and being clear about it."

The friends discussed what boundaries meant to them, realizing that boundaries could be both physical (like personal space) and emotional (like not allowing someone to make them feel bad about themselves).

Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy to Maintain Boundaries

To figure out how to maintain healthy boundaries with Trevor, the group decided to use the S.T.A.R. strategy:

Stop: When Trevor made comments that felt uncomfortable, they would pause and think about whether they wanted to engage or step away.

Think: They would consider why Trevor's behavior was bothering them. Was it the tone of his voice, the words he used, or the way he targeted certain topics?

Act: Depending on the situation, they could calmly express how they felt or remove themselves from the situation. They might say, "I don't appreciate that comment," or choose to walk away if it wasn't worth engaging.

Reflect: They would think about how setting a boundary affected the situation. Did it help Trevor understand their limits, or did they need to adjust their approach?

The friends recognized that they couldn't change Trevor's behavior, but they could control how they responded to it.

Testing Their Boundaries

The next day at recess, Trevor approached the group and made a teasing remark about Bennie's new haircut. "Looks like you lost a fight with a lawnmower!" Trevor joked, smirking.

Bennie felt his face get warm, but he remembered the S.T.A.R. strategy. He paused and decided to speak up calmly. "I actually like my haircut, Trevor," he said. "You don't have to like it, but I don't need to hear negative comments about it."

Trevor seemed taken aback by Bennie's response, and although he shrugged and walked away, Bennie felt proud for standing up for himself without getting angry.

Later, Buzz shared how he handled a different situation with Trevor. "He was making jokes about my drawing during art class," Buzz said. "Instead of saying something back, I just moved my seat to the other side of the room. I didn't want to listen to it."

The friends realized that sometimes maintaining boundaries meant speaking up, while other times it was best to remove themselves from the situation.

Reflecting on What They Learned

As the week went on, the group continued to practice setting boundaries with Trevor and even with each other when needed. They began to understand that setting boundaries wasn't about being mean or shutting people out, it was about protecting their well-being and letting others know what was acceptable.

Maya summed it up. "It's like we're teaching people how to treat us," she said. "If we show that we won't accept certain behavior, then people might think twice before crossing those boundaries again."

Betty agreed. "And if they don't respect our boundaries, that's okay too. It just means we need to keep them in place."

Moving Forward

The friends continued to reflect on how different situations affected their boundaries and how they could manage difficult relationships while still being kind. They knew they couldn't control how others behaved, but they could control how they responded and what they allowed in their lives.

As they moved through the rest of the school year, they kept practicing what they'd learned about boundaries, finding that it helped them feel more confident in difficult relationships. With a little patience, the support of their friends, and the strategies they were learning, they knew they could handle whatever came their way, always with a clear sense of where their boundaries lay.

And as they walked through the halls of school, they carried with them the quiet understanding that sometimes the strongest friendships and the healthiest relationships were built not just on being kind, but on knowing when to stand firm and where to draw the line.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “This story shows us how ...”

Post-Chapter Questions

These questions encourage children to think deeply about what they listen to and to understand that they can use the S.T.A.R. Strategy in many different situations.

- Why do the friends feel it’s important to set boundaries with Trevor?
- How can setting boundaries help us feel more confident in difficult situations?
- What are some examples of physical and emotional boundaries?
- Why do people sometimes hesitate to set boundaries with friends?
- How does the S.T.A.R. strategy help the group handle uncomfortable situations?
- Why is it important to stay calm when setting a boundary?
- How can reflection help us improve our boundary-setting skills?
- What should we do if someone doesn’t respect the boundaries we set?
- How can practicing boundaries make friendships stronger?
- How can boundaries help us stay kind while standing firm?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will practice setting boundaries by using a Boundary Reflection Journal



Activity: Boundary Reflection Journal

Introduce Activity

“Today, we’re going to take some quiet time to reflect on something that’s really important, **boundaries**. Boundaries are the ways we take care of ourselves and show others how we want to be treated. Sometimes, setting a boundary can feel hard, especially with friends or family, but it’s a powerful way to stay safe, respected, and happy.

I'm going to give each of you a special journal page called the *Boundary Reflection Journal*. This is your space to think about a time when it was hard to set a boundary, or a time when you wish you had spoken up or handled something differently.

You might write about a moment when someone didn't listen to you, took something of yours without asking, hurt your feelings, or crossed a line. These things happen, and it's okay to think about them now so we can learn how to handle them better next time.

We'll be using the **S.T.A.R. strategy** to help us walk through the situation and think of healthy ways to respond:

- **Stop** – What were you feeling in that moment?
- **Think** – What were you worried about?
- **Act** – What could you say or do to set a boundary next time?
- **Reflect** – How did it turn out? What might you do differently if it happens again?

You'll have about 15 to 20 minutes to write quietly. This is your personal reflection, you can share it with me or keep it private. What's most important is being honest with yourself so you can grow stronger and more confident in setting your own boundaries."

Instructions

- Distribute the "Boundary Reflection Journal" templates to each student.
- Ask students to think of a situation in their life where they struggled with setting a boundary or wish they had handled something differently. This could be with a friend, a classmate, or a family member.
- Students will write about the following prompts in their journals:
- Describe a situation where you needed to set a boundary (or wished you had):
 - How did the situation make you feel?
 - How could the S.T.A.R. strategy help in this situation?
 - Stop: What emotions were you feeling?
 - Think: What were you worried might happen?
 - Act: What could you do or say to set a boundary?

- Reflect: How did the situation turn out? What might you do differently next time?
- Allow students to write quietly for 15-20 minutes.

Closing Discussion (5 minutes):

Sharing



- Optional Share-Out:
- - Invite students to share their reflections with a partner or with the whole class (if they feel comfortable).

Wrapping It Up

- “Setting boundaries takes practice. The more we reflect on our experiences, the better we get at knowing when and how to set boundaries that feel right for us.”

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

Review and Reflection Overview:

- Have students reflect on their experiences and what they learned.

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

Gather in a Circle for Reflection:



- “Let’s all come back together in a circle.”
- “What is one thing you learned today about setting boundaries?”
- “How can using the S.T.A.R. strategy make it easier to maintain boundaries?”

Closing

- “Today we learned that setting boundaries is really about taking care of ourselves and showing others how we want to be treated. Sometimes it can feel hard to say ‘no’ or speak up, but it’s an important way to stay safe, feel respected, and protect our feelings. The more we practice, the easier it gets.

Remember, using the S.T.A.R. strategy helps us slow down, think clearly, and choose kind but strong actions. You deserve to have your voice heard, and setting boundaries is one powerful way to use that voice.”

Home Connection Letter

Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It explains that we learned about setting boundaries and how the S.T.A.R. Strategy can help us.”
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today in class, we discussed the importance of setting boundaries and maintaining healthy relationships. Your child reflected on personal experiences, setting boundaries using the S.T.A.R. strategy, Stop, Think, Act, Reflect.



We encourage you to continue this conversation at home. You can ask your child questions like:

- "What did you learn about boundaries today?"
- "Why do you think setting boundaries in friendships is important?"
- "How can we support each other when we need to set boundaries?"

Thank you for being so supportive in helping your child develop essential relationship skills.

With Gratitude,

S.T.A.R. Strategy



Stop -Take some deep breaths.

Think -What solutions are there?

Act -Pick the best solution.

Reflect -How did it go?



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Boundary Reflection Journal

1. Reflect on a Past Experience

- Describe a situation where you needed to set a boundary (or wished you had):

- How did the situation make you feel?

- Did you set a boundary? If yes, what was the result? If not, what do you wish you had done differently?

2. Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy to Plan for the Future

Stop: (What signs (feelings or thoughts) can help you recognize when a boundary needs to be set?)

Think: (What questions will you ask yourself before responding?)

Act: (How will you respond when someone crosses your boundary? Write a sentence or phrase you could use.)

Reflect: (After setting the boundary, what will you reflect on to know if it worked?)

3. Personal Reflection

- How do you think setting boundaries will help you feel more in control of your relationships?

- What is one thing you will do differently next time you need to set a boundary?

4. Optional: Share Your Thoughts

- Who can you talk to for advice or support if you need help setting a boundary?
