

Healthy Boundaries in Dating Relationships

Learning Objectives:

- 1) **Identify red-flags that a dating relationship has unhealthy boundaries**
- 2) **Recognize that unhealthy boundaries in dating relationships can lead to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse**
- 3) **Discuss what to do if you or a friend may be in danger**

In the *Called to Protect* video, you learned about three types of boundaries. What were they? (Physical, Emotional, Behavioral)

What about boundaries in dating relationships? How do we understand our boundaries in those situations?

Unfortunately, these relationships can be abusive. The abuse can be physical or emotional, and the effects can be devastating.

Effects of dating violence:

- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Risky sexual behavior
- Pregnancy
- Suicide
- PTSD
- Depression
- Poor academic performance

The abuse usually doesn't start out right away. Abusers will first try to break down a person's boundaries. These are red flags that need to be paid attention to. What are some examples of boundary violations in a dating relationship?

Physical boundaries:

- Hitting
- Punching
- Holding/restraining
- Rough-housing
- Inappropriate touch
- Biting

Emotional boundaries:

- **Humiliating**
- **Intimidation**
- **Insulting**
- **Controlling – what you wear, who your friends are, monitoring your texts or calls**
- **Jealousy/possessiveness**
- **Posting embarrassing pictures of you online or in texts**
- **Threatening to hurt themselves if you break up with them**
- **Texting too frequently to see where you are**

Behavioral boundaries:

- **Pressuring to take drugs or drink alcohol**
- **Encouraging sexually risky behaviors**
- **Coercing sexual activity**
- **Forcible rape**

Now let's think about how to recognize these boundary violations (some are actually serious enough to be considered abuse). Sometimes it is easier to see the warning signs in someone else's relationship rather than our own. Either way, it is important to act when we see them. Let's do an activity to help map out the seriousness of red flags in dating relationships,

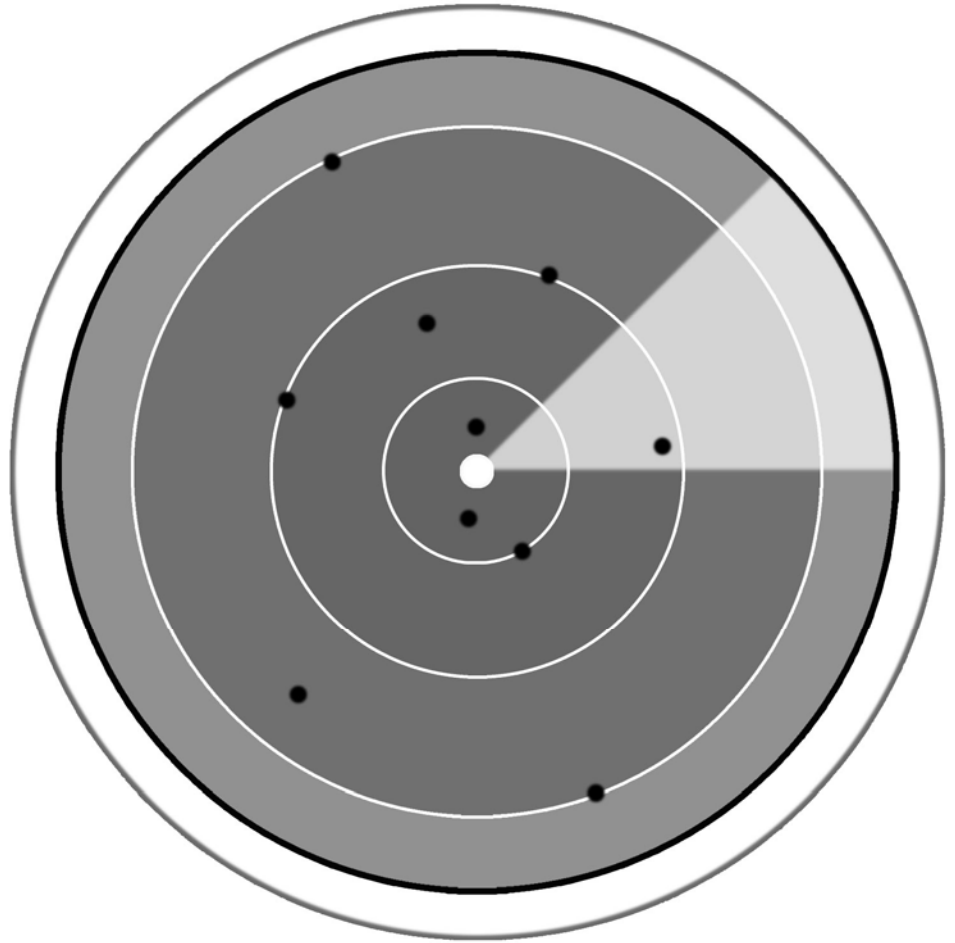
Activity: Out of Bounds!

Divide the youths into small groups of 3-4. Have them discuss the red flags on the Activity Sheet and then map them on the Boundary Radar. The groups should present their radar to others and discuss why they placed some as more serious than others.

Activity Sheet: Boundary Radar

Read through this list of red flags in a dating relationship. Put the corresponding number next to the dot or “blip” on the radar screen where you think it should go. The more serious the boundary violation/abuse, the closer it should go to the center of the radar. Explain to the larger group why you numbered your radar screen they way you did.

- 1. A date calls you a name you do not like.**
- 2. A date hits you or hurts you physically.**
- 3. A date does not allow you to leave a location.**
- 4. A date forces you to do something you don't want to do.**
- 5. Your parents tell you they don't like the person you are dating.**
- 6. Your date insists you stop seeing certain people or doing certain things.**
- 7. Your date gets jealous of your other friends or your family.**
- 8. You feel afraid of your date.**
- 9. Your date gets into physical fights with other people.**
- 10. You feel afraid to tell your parents or friends about something your date has said or done to you.**



Wrap-up

Sometimes it is easier to see other people's problems on your boundary radar than your own. If you or a friend is struggling with some of these red flags in a relationship, talk to a trusted adult to get your friend some help. Let your friend know that you want to help.

Resources

www.loveisrespect.org

www.seeitandstopit.org

www.thesafespace.org