

ESTABLISHING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Goal

The goal of this process is to teach caregivers, staff, and others how to help learners establish personal boundaries across settings and environments (including social distancing for COVID-19)

Learning Objectives

- The learner will understand what is considered personal space.
- The learner will be able to respond appropriately when given an example having to do with personal space.
- The learner will be able to identify what places are considered public (by Covid-19 standards). The learner will be able to keep an acceptable social distance from anyone who is not in their family, while they are in public places.

Rationale

Learning proper boundaries across settings and environments will enable learners to integrate into and respond to many social situations. Learning how to properly social distance will enhance the learner's ability to keep themselves and others safe and therefore access a wider variety of settings. Social distance skills may be a necessary skill for learners to integrate into schools and/or other public places during the pandemic.

Assessment of Needs

It is recommended that parents/caregivers begin by evaluating what skills and settings their learner needs to target through this protocol. One way to assess which skills might be needed is by using role-play examples and/or by directly observing the learner in each setting. Common settings or examples to evaluate can include:

- Community Park/Playground
- At home (immediate family, caregivers, guests)
- Grocery Store/ShoppingSports/recreational activities
- Touching others (hugs/high fives/play tag/etc)
- Elevator
- School
- Doctors office (waiting room/with the providers)
- While speaking to others
- Commonly shared spaces

Setting

Each caregiver should choose a location that they feel is important for their learner to acquire skills in. This skill should initially be taught in an environment where the learner is likely to learn the skill best. Practicing the skill in the environment where the learner will mostly use the skill will help promote generalization.

Materials

- Social distancing diagram
- Pictures of and/or access to different settings
- Social Narrative (written, pictures, or video)
- Hula-hoop (average 3 feet)
- Pool noodle (or other toys/items that are about 6 feet, like a lightsaber)
- Circles or X to place on the floor (to demonstrate how far to socially distance)

PROCEDURE

Behavioral skills teaching (BST) will be used to teach the appropriate boundary skills to the learners. BST consists of 4 steps: instruction, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback.

1. Provide Instructions/Rationale for the Learner

State the rules and reasons about why we are practicing this skill to the learner. In the list below, there are examples of different settings with socially appropriate boundaries described. Pick a setting from your assessment review the expected behavior for that setting.

Social Narratives/YouTube Videos

Neither pre-teaching nor instructions alone are typically enough to increase the behavior that we want to improve or change behavior on their own. As part of a comprehensive plan, social narratives (for example YouTube videos) can be helpful. Social Narratives are used to visually show the learner the rationale for the new skill. Below are a few examples to choose from. Pick a social narrative that your learner will relate to.

Example of Social Narratives:

- [Sesame Street: Practicing Social Distancing](#)
- [Social Story: Personal Space](#)
- [Social Story about Personal Space](#)
- [Social Story about Giving Consent](#)

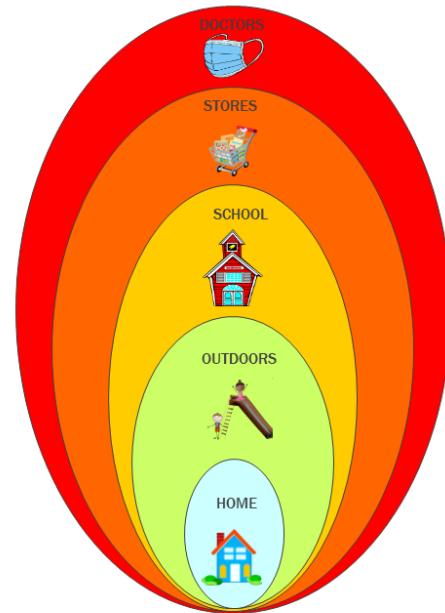
Social Distancing Diagram

Use this visual to guide your learner in identifying various environments that your learner might be in and examples of expected behavior that correlates to each category.

SOCIAL DISTANCING AND BOUNDARIES

COLOR KEY

- **Red - Medical Settings:** Masks are required, maintain 6 feet distance, stay close to a parent or guardian if possible.
- **Orange - Public Stores:** masks may be required, maintain 6 feet distance, stay close to a parent or guardian if possible.
- **Yellow - School:** Masks often needed unless eating/drinking or otherwise directed by a teacher, minimum 3 feet distance recommended.
- **Light Green - Outdoors:** Masks are not necessary, maintain personal bubble, ask permission to enter someone's space.
- **Light Blue - Home:** Masks and social distancing are not necessary.



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2. Modeling

Demonstrate the skill to the learner. Modeling teaches learners what to do.

- The instructor can do this in person or via video modeling.
- Modeling is most effective when it is relatable and realistic to the learner
- Modeling should be done in a positive manner, demonstrating the skills that we want the learner to perform. That is, we do not need to model the incorrect behavior.
- Video modeling can be a very effective way to model desirable behaviors.
 - Videos can be made to show the model performing the skill in the targeted environment.
 - Videos can also be found on YouTube or other online sources.
- If doing in-person modeling, consider utilizing someone who is already skilled in the behavior you are modeling and someone who has high social status to the learner (e.g. a peer that they look up to, sibling, or favorite character).

3. Rehearsal

Now the learner will practice the skill that was introduced and modeled. This will be done through role play examples. Provide the learner with a scenario and have them demonstrate the skill.

- Repeated practice in a variety of contexts is beneficial to increase fluency and generalization
- Role plays are most effective when it is realistic to the context in which the learner will eventually perform the skill.

4. Feedback

It is important to provide feedback immediately. After the learner engaged in the role-play example, provide feedback as soon as possible.

- If the learner got the role-play example correct, provide positive feedback in the form of reinforcement together with praise. In order to identify potential preferences, a preference assessment can be conducted. Below are resources on how to conduct a preference assessment.
- Or if the learner got the role-play example wrong provide corrective feedback (tell the learner what he/she did wrong and remodel the skill for them), together with encouragement and support. Keep it positive!
- Remember repetition is very important. If the learner got the role-play example wrong, correct them, and give them a chance to try again. The learner will acquire the skill through repeated examples.

Resources on How to Conduct Preference Assessments

Just asking a learner what they want or prefer is not a reliable way to identify reinforcers. Preference assessments can help. Some very easy-to-follow tutorials on how to conduct a preference assessment can be found on the [Evidence-Based Instructional Practice website](#).

- Preference assessments are an important step and can help determine what a learner will work for. If you can, try not to skip over this step. This will help you create a hierarchy of the learner's preferred reinforcers.
 - Preference assessments should be done prior to the start of the intervention.

Setting	Expected Behavior (Appropriate Boundaries)	Expected Behavior with COVID-19*	Role-Play Examples
Park or Playground	When talking and playing with others make sure not to get too close to them and "POP" their personal	Keeping socially distant from other people. (See the list of materials)	We are on a playground sitting on a bench.

	<p>space bubble. The instructor can model the skill to the learner by taking out a hula-hoop or using an arms-length and standing in the center, having someone else stand right outside the hoop and demonstrate the appropriate space.</p> <p>If we want to join someone, or they are blocking our way we can ask permission or politely ask for space.</p>	<p>for optional visuals).</p>	<p>Instructor: Sit down on the bench and tell the learner to sit down. If the learner sits an appropriate length away, provide praise and positive reinforcement. If the learner sits too close, model the skill and try again.</p>
Elevator	<p>It is okay to stand a little closer to someone in an elevator than you would outside of the elevator, but it is still important that we are not coming too close to anyone (keep about an arm's length away), and we should not be touching anyone. If the elevator looks full, wait for the next one, rather than squeeze in.</p>	<p>If there is a red X or a circle on the floor, stand in one. Some elevators may say only X amount of people can ride in it due to COVID-19.</p>	<p>Place blue masking tape on the floor in the shape of a square to represent an elevator.</p> <p>Instructor: "Let's get into this elevator together."</p> <p>Give feedback based on where the learner stands next to the instructor in the "elevator".</p>
School	<p>When playing with our friends at school we do not want to make them uncomfortable by getting too close to them or touching anyone without permission. If we want to give our friend a hug or a high five, we must ask permission, and then listen to what they said.</p>	<p>We have to keep socially distant from our friends all day at school to keep everyone healthy. This may mean that we cannot sit close to them at circle time, snack time, and lunchtime. We may not be able to hold hands or play too close to each other.</p>	<p>Instructor: "Today, we are going to practice setting and respecting our personal boundaries. I want you to think of a friend that you may play with at school. Your parents will be pretending to be a friend and I want you to respond as if this is your friend. Let's practice. (Parent) wants to touch (learner)'s hair. (Learner) will set their boundary and hold it. (Parent) will respect the (learner)'s boundary. I will count backward and say 'go'.</p>

			<p>Three, two, one, go.”</p> <p>The parent asked, “Can I touch your hair?” The learner gave a “yes”, “no”, or no response (no indication of a boundary) (Bell, 2020).</p>
Store	We stay close to our parents or the adults we are with but, make sure not to get into strangers' bubbles.	When we are passing people in the aisle or when waiting online, keep social distance. The instructor can model this skill by standing on an X and having someone standing on an X in front of them, when the person in front moves then the instructor moves up.	<p>Instructor: Tell the learner we are waiting in line at the grocery store.</p> <p>“Let’s pretend I am the person standing in front of you in line at the grocery store. I am blocking the gum that you want to have a closer look at, what do you do?”</p> <p>Do you reach over me, ask ‘excuse me,’ or wait for me to move?</p>

*You can specify to the learner if the example is during COVID-19 or not.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

Peer modeling: Use someone of high social status to the learner to model the behavior.

Teaching consent skills: teaching these skills can also be done through role-play/BST.

Teaching waiting skills: These skills can also be taught through the use of differential reinforcement, role-play/BST, and a variety of other interventions.

Disclaimer: This is not intended to be, and cannot replace the benefits of individualized treatment. These are general recommendations. If you continue to have any concerns, please consult directly with a licensed and/or board-certified behavior analyst.

The educational resources and supplemental materials above were designed and developed by the Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing, in collaboration with faculty from the Wegmans School of Nursing at St. John Fisher College and Daemen College. The training materials were created with input from stakeholders, including service providers, families and individuals with IDD, and staff from congregate care settings.

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