

ACROSS THE ROOM

This exercise is an opportunity to practice using our body language and our voices to set boundaries with another person. Similar to the Hand on the Knee activity, but more physically active. (teachhomealive.org)

Requirements:

A space big enough for participants to move freely. Two instructors (one as lead facilitator, the other to support in demonstrating). Allow 10-12 minutes for the exercise and 3-5 minutes to debrief.

Instructions:

Have participants line up in two rows about 10-15 feet apart, facing each other. Make sure everyone in the two rows is paired with/facing someone from the opposite row. Each group is going to take turns advancing towards the other, and then being stopped.

(Acknowledge to the participants that this activity is void of context regarding who the two people are, whether they know each other, etc. Addressing context is a big element of Home Alive's philosophy; occasionally, we practice context-less activities in order to focus on skill-building.)

Round 1: Setting a boundary using body language.

Explain: "Everyone in row 1, pick a spot on the floor that you do not want crossed. Keep the location to yourself. When I say, 'go,' the people in row 2 will walk towards you. When your counterpart in row 2 reaches the spot you've picked, use your body language to indicate you don't want them to come any closer. What are some examples of how to do this?" Solicit and demonstrate some examples from the group, such as: put up one hand; get into your ready stance; turn your back to them; walk away; etc. "Row 2, when you see your counterpart in row 1 has set their boundary with you, you will respect the boundary and stop walking."

Allow each group to take a turn practicing this skill.

Round 2: Setting a boundary using voice and body language.

This time, participants will use their voice in addition to their body language to indicate to their counterpart to stop coming any closer. This is an opportunity to practice using the Four Skills (Name it, Direct it, Repeat it, End it). Ask for some examples from the group of things to say to indicate you don't want them to come any closer. Examples include: say or yell "stop"; "back off"; "you're too close"; etc. Since some participants tend to be louder or quieter than others, this round can be repeated to allow participants who are quieter to practice being louder, and participants who are louder to practice being quiet-yet-firm.

Round 3: Reinforcing a boundary that has been crossed, using voice and body language.

This time, participants walking toward the boundary-setter will continue past the designated stopping point, so that the boundary-setter can practice re-setting their boundary and using a combination of body language, the Four Skills, tone, volume, inflection, etc. This can look like, "you're too close – back off!" (name it & direct it); "stop stop stop!" (repeat a directive); starting quiet and getting louder; etc.

Debrief Questions:

After both groups have had a chance to practice all three rounds, have participants thank their partners. Ask the group: What was hard? What was easy? How did it make you feel?