

# Responsibility

This week students learn about having healthy boundaries so they can take appropriate steps toward responsibility. Students are reminded that they are not responsible for everything but there are some things for which they are entirely responsible. The aim is to give students a sense of awareness for their personal, social, and public responsibilities and learn how to maintain healthy boundaries for themselves, with others, and even with technology.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

## Main Lesson

**Whole Class Lesson**  
30 minutes



### Rings of Responsibility

This lesson introduces students to the idea of boundaries and space, and where our responsibilities lie within the various spatial boundaries we share with ourselves and others. (See page 3 for lesson details.)

## Mini Lessons

**For Small Groups**  
15 minutes



### Not My Responsibility

Remember that we don't have to feel responsible for everything. We can only be responsible for what we personally can control. In small groups using a T-chart, map out the things that are always within your control and things that are not. The rest of the day, focus on the things you can control and take responsibility for those choices. For the uncontrollable things, set up healthy boundaries to remind yourself that those things are not necessarily yours to handle today.

**Extension idea:** Brainstorm some techniques we can use to help calm our bodies and brains down so that we make responsible choices and maintain healthy boundaries when things we don't control happen to us.

**For Partners**  
15 minutes



### It's OK to Say No

Sometimes we are in situations where we are asked to do something we aren't comfortable with or know we should not do. If we don't have self-respect and healthy personal boundaries, we might be tempted to be irresponsible and make a poor choice. And sometimes these poor choices are actually good choices. For example, you are asked to babysit but you have to study for your English test that night. You don't want to disappoint the mother who asked you, but it is more responsible to say no to her request. This can be hard, though. With your partner, practice several "No" strategies to help you reject situations that make you compromise your boundaries or that are just not good personal choices for you. Some strategies include:

- Broken record (repeating "no" over and over)
- Changing the subject

- Saying “thank you” for the offer/invitation/opportunity, but it won’t work in my schedule right now
- Using empathy (“I understand you are in the tough situation but I am not able to help right now.”)
- Explain themselves and/or offer an alternative idea (“Loud noises actually make me really uncomfortable, so I wouldn’t be a good friend at the concert because I’ll be pretty stressed out. But, I could join you at the coffee shop afterward!”).

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### **My Personal Space**

Hand out the personal space diagram used in the primary lesson. Have students jot down the responsibilities that fall within these boundaries for them personally. Then, have them think/journal about this: How can they maintain healthy boundaries when confronted with someone who is crossing a boundary line or who is being disruptive or irresponsible within social and public spaces? For example, if a friend is constantly hovering around your locker and you need some space, what can you say or do to be respectful yet maintain a healthy personal or intimate boundary? Students can journal about their reflection.

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### **Healthy Boundaries with Technology**

Large group discussion or journal prompts: How has technology impacted our abilities to maintain healthy boundaries? How does technology prevent us from maintaining healthy boundaries? How can we use self-discipline to enforce healthy boundaries with technology? [e.g., no phones at the dinner table, no Internet after a certain time at night, no TV/game system in the bedroom, etc.] (Refer to the personal space handout and/or information from the primary lesson).

# Rings of Responsibility

This lesson introduces students to the idea of boundaries and space, and where our responsibilities lie within the various spatial boundaries we share with ourselves and others.

## Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

## Required Materials

- Rings of Responsibility handout
- Optional Extension:  
The Washington Post published an article that explains personal space boundaries for people of different countries; this could be an interesting tech extension or extension for students who need/want more challenge:  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/24/how-close-is-too-close-depends-on-where-you-live/?utm\\_term=.0848e250ce9c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/24/how-close-is-too-close-depends-on-where-you-live/?utm_term=.0848e250ce9c)

## Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Evaluate healthy boundaries
- Identify responsibilities that fall within intimate, personal, social, and public spatial boundaries

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Sometimes it helps to think about our responsibilities through a variety of lenses: rights vs. responsibilities, personal and professional boundaries, and sources of responsibility. Each one gives us a new perspective about what is a responsibility and what is not. For example, you have a right to a safe, positive work environment. As such, you are responsible for contributing to that safe, positive environment. What is your school's staff culture like? What are teacher relationships like? What is the tenor of the staff break room? Are teachers and administrators on the same page? What responsibilities do you have as part of that community to ensure a safe, positive working environment? What about your personal and professional boundaries at work? If you have students who have personal struggles and, consequently, bring their aggression, sadness, or frustrations to your room, what is your responsibility? Your responsibility is to teach those kids and ensure a classroom environment conducive to learning for all students. It is not your responsibility to "fix" their home situation or personally assess and address their mental or emotional health issues. Set a personal and professional boundary by not taking their issues personally and seek other school professionals or public services to help your students in the way they need to be helped. What about knowing where your responsibilities come from? Do you know why you do what you do? Have you created responsibilities for yourself or were they given to you by someone else? Knowing the source of your responsibilities can help you prioritize them and be more efficient. Take some time today to evaluate your rights and responsibilities, to set some boundaries you need to set, and to understand why you do what you do.

## Share

5-7 minutes

In this unit we are talking about responsibility. How many of you, since last week, have had the opportunity to take responsibility for something or make a responsible choice, and *avoided* blaming others or being dishonest about completing what you were asked to do? (Invite students to share if they want.)

Good! Keep working on that! It actually feels good to take responsibility for something, even if it means owning up to something you forgot to do or choose not to do. Not that it feels good to disappoint people, but it feels good to make those situations right.



## Inspire

15 minutes

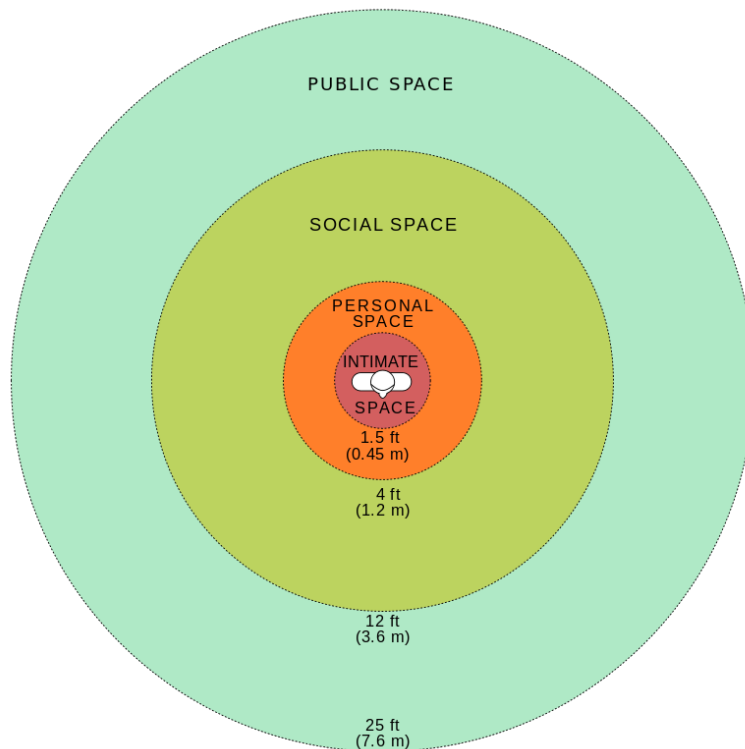
This week we are going to talk about the boundaries of responsibility. Sometimes it feels like we need to be responsible for everyone and everything. As you get older, you will be given more responsibility and it may be hard to know where that line stops. The truth is not everything is your responsibility. As a class, as a school, in your family, there are shared responsibilities. We all pitch in to make things work. And, if you start doing things that are technically the responsibility of someone else, they won't learn to fulfill their part in the group and you will get overwhelmed with too much to do and think about. So, it is important to have good boundaries with people when deciding what is and is not your responsibility.



## Empower

20 minutes [Recommendation: Break this into two 10-minute parts; Part 1 for the explanation and Part 2 for the activity. This extends the lesson time, but it may be necessary.]

To help us know where the boundary of responsibility is, it helps to know what our personal boundaries are. Let's look at this image:



(Source: WebHamster, 2009, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/))

*Either project the image on the smart board or draw it on the whiteboard, but students will also need a printout for the final activity, so you could hand this out to students right now, too.*

Your intimate space encompasses usually the first 18 inches around you. So, from your body outward of about 1 ½ feet (about 17-18 inches), that is your space. Some people say if you outstretch your arms, anything arms distance and inward is your intimate space. And, the closer to you, the more intimate or private it becomes. You do not have to tolerate people getting in your face, for example, or touching you if you don't want them to. That 1 ½ feet is your responsibility and yours alone. Likewise, someone else's intimate space is theirs. Do not assume someone wants you inside their space without an invitation. It is important to remember that you are not responsible for someone's intimate space. For example, it is not your responsibility to ensure everyone around you is happy, even though it is kind of you to ask how you can help if you see someone is sad and to be a good friend. But, if they choose to stay unhappy or if it is not safe for you to engage with that person, it is not your job to "fix it". Your job is to be responsible for your own intimate space and well-being.

Outside of that intimate space, though, we enter into more shared spaces. About four feet out from the edge of your intimate space is called personal space. This is where you still feel like it is your space but other people will come and go, sitting by you at lunch, passing by you in the hallway, and hanging out with you in class or at home. Sometimes, it can feel like people are in your intimate space (like if they are sitting right by you at lunch, for example) but they are operating within a mindset of more personal or even social space. They don't mean to be too close, but that is just how crowded the lunch table is. Your personal space can still belong largely to you, but remember that your personal space will intersect with other people's personal space, too, so you have to be gracious. What happens inside your personal space, though, is also largely your responsibility. How you treat that person sitting next to you at lunch is your responsibility. They also have a responsibility to be a good lunch seat buddy too.

From 4 feet to 12 feet, this is called social space. This is where you spend time hanging with friends, working with teammates, interacting at school or at home, or even out in smaller community spaces. Here the responsibility is shared by those in the space. Anyone occupying or sharing social space should respect those in that space with them.

From 12 feet to 25 feet, we enter "public space." This is your public restaurants, stores, streets, sidewalks, the school campus at large, and sometimes the classroom. Like social space, we have a responsibility to act appropriately, kindly, and helpfully in these spaces, but we are not personally responsible for everything that happens within those spaces. If the lines are crazy long at the store, for example, that is not our responsibility to fix, though it is our responsibility to wait patiently.

#### **Activity:**

I am going to give each of you a handout of these space rings, and then I am going to read aloud various responsibilities we have. I want you to write down that responsibility in the ring where you think it is most appropriate. *Hand out Rings of Responsibility worksheet and read from the following list, giving students time to write in between. They can simply write the number down, too.*

1. Brushing your teeth
2. Turning in your homework on time
3. Being a good friend
4. Following the school rules
5. Practicing your instrument before the concert

6. Saying kind things about yourself
7. Giving others a compliment
8. Working hard on your math
9. Sitting quietly in the library
10. Cleaning up after you eat your lunch
11. Cleaning your room at home
12. Caring for a grandparent
13. Waiting patiently in line at a store
14. Waving at a neighbor
15. Sharing positive things online



## Reflect

5-7 minutes

Let's see where you placed the things I just listed. Check your answers and if you put something in a different ring than what I read here, let's talk about your ideas. Note that some could be argued for different spaces as indicated below.

1. Brushing your teeth - intimate
2. Turning in your homework on time - social
3. Being a good friend - personal/social
4. Following the school rules - social/public
5. Practicing your horn before the concert - social
6. Saying kind things about yourself - intimate
7. Giving others a compliment - social
8. Working hard on your math - personal
9. Sitting quietly in the library - personal/social
10. Cleaning up after you eat your lunch - personal/social
11. Cleaning your room at home - personal/social
12. Caring for a grandparent - social
13. Waiting patiently in line at a store - public
14. Waving at a neighbor - social/public
15. Sharing positive things online - public

It is important to remember that, while we have a responsibility to be kind, caring, helpful, and respectful in all spaces, some spaces (like our intimate and personal space) are our responsibility alone, just like another person's intimate and personal space is their responsibility. It is important to remember that and to not either give someone else power over your intimate or personal space or to take power over someone else's intimate or personal space. Those are spaces you need to be invited into. Social and public spaces are more fluid, though. Sometimes we'll find things happen that are not our responsibility but sometimes we'll find we can be helpful and show responsibility (like practicing our horn so we can contribute in positive ways at the concert). It's not necessarily our responsibility to ensure the entire band sounds good, but it is our responsibility to make sure we sound good! This can be a hard thing to think about, but spend some time evaluating where your responsibilities are and how you are fulfilling them. Don't take on responsibilities that aren't yours to take and don't give up responsibilities that are yours alone.

# Rings of Responsibility

