

Lesson Topic: Personal Space

Suggested Time

30-35 minutes

Objectives/Goals

The student(s) will be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of personal space
2. Describe what factors determine personal space
3. Discuss what happens when we use personal space correctly
4. Discuss the consequences for not using personal space
5. Describe how to use personal space in different social settings
6. Role play personal space in a variety of social settings (optional)
7. Explain social distancing and why it is important (optional)

Materials

- Chairs, couch, bench or other objects to sit on
- Paper and writing tool
- Computer/tablet to watch the video(s)

Guided Practice

1. Introduce the lesson.

- a. Today we are going to talk about the importance of personal space and what factors determine how much personal space to use.
- b. We are also going to talk about what happens when we do or don't use personal space.
- c. We are going to practice personal space in different settings.
- d. If appropriate, participate in the role play and discuss social distancing.

2. Watch the video on personal space.

It is around 10 minutes long. Review the discussion points from the video.

3. Discuss the meaning of personal space.

List the answers on paper if you choose.

- Personal space is the distance between you and another individual(s).
- Factors that determine personal space may include the type of relationship, health, social setting and/or hygiene habits of the individuals.

4. Discuss the distance we use for personal space.

List the answers on paper if you choose.

- The ideal amount of personal space between two people is about two feet (or one arm's length). Everyone's arms are different lengths, and that's okay.

- If you or another individual is sick, it's best to provide more personal space. Try to stay six feet (or the width of an average car) away.
- Personal space distance may include personal items too. For example, if two students are in line at the cafeteria, the personal space between them should be an arm's length plus the lunch tray.

5. Explain what happens when personal space is used correctly.

List the answers on paper if you choose.

- It makes those around you feel more comfortable.
- It helps prevent the spread of germs.
- It can lead to new friendships.

6. Explain the consequences of not using personal space.

List the answers on paper if you choose.

- People around you may feel very upset and uncomfortable.
- People may get angry and possibly yell or hit you.
- You or those around you may spread germs that cause illness.
- People, including friends, may not want to be around you.

7. Discuss how relationships affect personal space.

Demonstrate each scenario if you choose.

- If the individual is a friend or family member, you may stand closer to them to feel more comfortable.
- If the individual is an acquaintance, standing an arm's length away may feel comfortable for both of you.
- If the individual is a stranger, you may stand more than an arm's length away to feel more comfortable.

8. Discuss using personal space during various social settings.

- **Movie Theater:** Consider the seat between two people to be an arm's length of personal space. There cannot always be an empty seat between strangers, but that's okay. Use three chairs to practice sitting at a theater with and without using personal space. Ask the student(s) how it makes them feel.
- **Bus:** An arm's length between two people is the ideal amount of personal space. However, sometimes seats must be shared with one or two more people. We can scrunch our bodies and lean the opposite direction to provide more personal space for ourselves and others. Use a couch, two chairs or a bench to practice this scenario with and without using personal space. Ask the student(s) how it makes them feel.
- **Mall or Store:** While there might be a lot of space between people that are walking around, there might be less than an arm's length between individuals standing in a checkout line. Practice standing in a checkout line and polite ways to request more personal space.

9. Discuss how hygiene may affect personal space.

- If you're standing next to someone that hasn't showered and may smell, stand more than one arm's length away.
- If you don't shower or bathe, other people may stand far away from you and not want to be close. They may make fun of you or say mean things as well. Ask the student(s) how this would make them feel.

10. Review this lesson.

Review the meaning of personal space, what factors determine personal space as well as how people may feel when it's done correctly and incorrectly.

Optional Discussion Topics

Personal Space Role Plays

Ask the student(s) to demonstrate how they would use personal space in the following social settings. Can they think of more scenarios in which personal space is important?

- Sporting event
- School hallway
- Church
- Waiting room
- Elevator

Social Distancing

Social distancing is the practice of maintaining a greater than usual physical distance from other people or objects during the outbreak of a contagious disease. Social distancing is important, because it mimimizes the risk of contracting and spreading further illness.

- **Visual Examples of Social Distancing**
cnn.com/2020/03/24/health/six-feet-social-distance-explainer-coronavirus-wellness/index.html

Additional Resources

oureverydaylife.com/personal-space-exercises-games-12082538.html

This web site lists various games and activities which can be used to practice personal space.