



*Children have a natural desire to explore the world and test boundaries. Recently, there has been increased focus on how boundaries affect child personal safety. Overwhelmingly, the evidence points to the importance of personal boundaries in keeping children aware of potentially dangerous situations and how fostering this can help reduce the risk of victimization.*

## Boundaries And Child Personal Safety

### UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

Child sexual offenders often try to break personal boundaries, gain trust and normalize sexual activity between adults and children. Children with an understanding of personal boundaries are more likely to disrupt the grooming process, thereby reducing their risk of sexual exploitation.

### STARTING POINT

Building personal boundaries should begin when children are very young; beginning with pointing out when children push the boundaries of others. It is important to re-establish those boundaries and consistently explain how they have been crossed.

#### Examples of children crossing boundaries:

- The child answers questions on behalf of the parent
- The child wants to be a part of adult conversations
- The child acts “in charge” of the parent and/or siblings
- The child wants access to adult material and information (movies, TV shows, and websites, etc.)

### HOW PARENTS CAN START DRAWING THE LINE...

**1 Establish and reinforce the role of the children within the family.** When children want to listen to adult conversations pertaining to adult decision-making and adult-related topics, gently re-establish the line. Children should be separated from adult issues.

**2 Avoid involving children in adult relationship issues such as intimacy concerns.** This reinforces the child’s role in the family and builds their feeling of security.

**3 Teach children to respect personal space and privacy.** Establish family privacy for using the bathroom, bathing and changing. Designate a personal space in the home for each person’s belongings (a bedroom, closet, drawers or shelves, etc.).



For more information about boundaries and personal safety, visit [www.kidsintheknow.ca](http://www.kidsintheknow.ca).

