

Boundary Busters

Teacher instructions:

This brainstorming activity is designed to help students prepare for unwanted or uncomfortable comments about their bodies and gives them the words to use when someone crosses a boundary.

Ask students what are some ways that someone might comment or ask about their growing bodies. Use these examples to spark the discussion:

- Whoa! You're so tall!
- Why don't you wear deodorant? You stink!
- It looks like you've started puberty.
- Are you wearing a bra now?
- Do you shave yet?
- You haven't grown at all!
- You look so young.

Students might laugh, feel uncomfortable, or not react to the examples you come up with. Let them know that we all will feel differently, and if they want to respond, the next section will teach them how to do so respectfully.

Teacher note: It might be tempting for students to name a specific incident with a specific peer during this brainstorm activity. Establish a ground rule that this brainstorm should not call anyone out; this is an opportunity to think about ways they might feel uncomfortable when someone is talking to them about puberty.

Tell students that comments and questions like the ones you just discussed might come from curiosity, surprise, or teasing. But kids should feel empowered—they get to decide how to respond. They likely need reminding, though, that while asking for respect, they should show kindness. This makes everyone involved feel less awkward.

Next, brainstorm real phrases they can use as respectful, confident replies. Record them on a poster so that students can be reminded of what they can say if they feel uncomfortable. Examples might include:

- I like how I'm growing.
- That's not something to joke about.
- That's not your business.
- Let's talk about something else.
- Please don't talk about my body.
- I don't want to talk about that with you.
- That's private.
- You're making me uncomfortable. Please stop.

Let students know that they always have the choice in how to respond and these phrases can help when responding to unwelcome comments. But they can also simply walk away and/or tell a trusted adult if they need help.

Teacher note: Remind students that they can always ask their trusted adult questions about puberty. Puberty is a long process, and they are likely to have lots of questions along the way. It's normal to be curious, and it's important to go to the right people for answers.