

# Cross the Line

**CASEL Core Competencies:** Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills

**State Health Standards:** Standard 4, Standard 5, Standard 7

**Learner/Participant Objectives:** Accurate self-perception, self-efficacy, empathy, appreciating diversity, respect for others

**Content Warnings:** Hardships within family structure

**Facilitator Tips:** Feel free to get creative and use “cross the line if...” examples based on community and cultural relevancy! This doubles as a great getting to know you.

**Key Terms:** Empathy, connectedness

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Materials:** Tape or string to divide the room in half

**Background:** Empathy means being able to put yourself in other’s shoes. The more we can find common understanding—especially amongst those who seem different than us—the more we’re able to understand and support those around us. This exercise is a visually powerful way for Participants to recognize both similar and unique life experiences with their peers.

**Resources:**

[20 Questions to Get Kids Talking & Build Community](#)

## Procedure

- Create a line in the middle of the room and ask Participants to stand behind the line, so that everyone starts in the same place.
- Explain that you will read a question starting with, “Cross the line if...” and if the statement applies to them, they should step to the other side of the line. Remind Participants that ROOTS about the Rule of Roots, and they should only share experiences they feel comfortable disclosing.
- Inform the group that this is a silent exercise and there should be no talking, except for the person asking the questions. Ask if there are any questions before beginning.
- Begin the game. Read a question beginning with, “Cross the line if \_\_\_\_\_.” Participants step across the line if it applies to them and remain on the starting side of the line if it does not. Pause and ask the Participants to silently look around and observe who is standing with them.

The following is a list of sample questions. The questions should be tailored to meet the needs of your group i.e., age, ethnicities, interests, hobbies.

**“Cross the line if...”**

- You have brown hair
  - You have a sister
  - You have a brother
  - You have a lot of chores at home
  - Your parents do not speak English
  - Your parents speak another language
  - You speak another language
  - You are African American
  - You are Mexican
  - You are Asian
  - You are Jewish
  - You are Muslim
  - You have experienced discrimination (race, ethnicity)
  - You have ever been told you are ugly
  - You have ever been teased/bullied
  - You have ever made fun of someone because of how they look
  - You have ever travelled outside of California
  - You are in foster care
  - You wish you could change something about your body
  - You have ever been told you could not do something
  - You are expected to succeed at everything you do
  - You have ever been told that you were not going to make it in life
  - You know anyone who has been in jail
  - Sometimes you deal with difficult situations at home
  - You made a bad decision because of peer pressure or fear
  - You have ever had someone you did not know help you
  - You have ever helped someone you did not know
  - Someone you care about has been mean to you
- After asking several questions, ask if anyone else in the group has a question they would like to ask.
  - After several rounds of questions and crossing the line, have Participants sit comfortably. Have Participants reflect on the activity by asking the following questions:
    - How did it feel to cross the line?
    - How did it feel when you did not cross the line?
    - What surprised you the most during this activity?
    - What did you learn?
    - What lessons can you take away from this activity?