

PERSONAL SPACE

refrains from drawing too close to people who appear uncomfortable.

"If I think they need a lot of personal space, I let them come to me when they're ready," said Paul, 17, from Corpus Christi Church in Rochester.

"It's just a feeling," remarked Krissy Van Slyke, 15, from St. Jude's Church in Gates.

That feeling kicks in for Jeremy Luke when somebody sits right next to him on a bus while several other seats are available.

"I get annoyed a little bit. I think, 'They could have sat somewhere else,'" remarked Jeremy, 17, from St. Patrick's Church in Macedon. However, Jeremy added, he goes out of his way to offer the seat next to him if a bus is getting crowded.

Elevators are another place where crowded conditions often develop. But Allison McGuffie said that she actually prefers a crowded elevator to one that is nearly empty. Although she can lose herself in a crowd, she explained, she feels more self-conscious if just one or two people stand close to her.

"If there are a few people, you feel you need a lot of space. But with a lot of people, it doesn't matter," said Allison, 16, from St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan.



Alanna Gottshall of St. Michael's Church, Penn Yan, sets her personal boundaries.

*** Fear of being reprimanded (by a teacher, boss or parent) increases individual distance, but hope of gaining approval decreases it.**

Then again, Krissy said she doesn't really care for crowds of any size when she's on an elevator.

"I'm like, 'I wish this would hurry up,'" she said.

Krissy has a similar need for personal space at church. If given a seating choice, she said, "I'd go for the uncrowded areas."

Jeremy said he also seeks out open space at church. He said this is not so much for his own comfort level, but rather to respect other worshippers' personal space.

"I wouldn't want them to feel I was sitting on top of them," Jeremy said.

On the other hand, Allison said she purposely heads for a crowded area at church.

"I'm not off in my own little space. Church is supposed to be, like, community," Allison explained.

Ben Aman, also, has learned that personal space requirements can vary from person to person. Though Ben feels he can go right up to a stranger and begin a conversation, he's noticed that some people back off when he does this.

"They're kind of shy. They don't look me in the eye," said Ben, 16, from St. Patrick's Church in Macedon.

Allison suggested that a balanced approach — somewhere between getting in a person's face and being standoffish — might be the best way to navigate personal space issues.

"If I'm just meeting somebody, I like a little bit of distance — but I still want to be close enough to focus on them," she said.

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*** Strange mannerisms and bizarre attire are tactics for keeping other people at a distance.**

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