

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

Philosophy

What is a Circle of Grace?

The Christian faith teaches that God has created each of us as unique and special. Genesis 1:27 tells us that we are created “male and female in God’s image” and that God saw this as “very good.” In that goodness, we are meant to respect ourselves and everyone else as persons created and loved by God.

Adults assist young people to recognize God’s love by helping them to understand that each of us lives and moves in a *Circle of Grace*. You can imagine your own *Circle of Grace* by putting your arms above your head then circle down in front of your body including side to side. This circle, front to back, holds who you are in your body and through your senses. It holds your very essence in mind, heart, soul, and sexuality.

Why is it important to help our young people understand the Circle of Grace?

God intends our relationships in life to be experiences of divine love. Respectful, nurturing, loving relationships increase our understanding of our own value and help us to love others. It is never too early to help young people understand how very special they are and how relationships in life are called to be sacred. Understanding this can help them to protect the special person they are and to be respectful of others.

Adults, as they strive to provide a safe and protective environment, hold the responsibility to help young people understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where young people recognize when they are safe or unsafe and know how to bring their concerns, fears, and uncertainties to the trusted adults in their lives.

How is the Circle of Grace Program different from other protection programs?

According to research, one in four girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused by age eighteen.¹ Many protection programs focus on “stranger danger,” however, up to ninety percent of the time the perpetrator is a relative, family friend or other person known to the child/young person. Circle of Grace goes beyond just protection by helping young people understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

Goal of the Circle of Grace Program - Grades K-12

The goal of the *Circle of Grace* program is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

Objectives of the Circle of Grace Program - Grades K-12

- Children/Young People will understand they are created by God the Father and live in His love along with the love of His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- Children/Young People will be able to describe the Circle of Grace which God gives each of us.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify, discern and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify all types of boundary violations.
- Children/Young People will demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.

Summary of the Key Concepts of “Circle of Grace”



God gives each of us a Circle of Grace (see below) where He is always “Present”:

*Raise your hands above your head, then bring your outstretched arms slowly down.
Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you
embrace all of the space around you
slowly reach down to your feet.
Knowing that God is in this space with you. This is your Circle of Grace; you are in it.*

God is “Present” because He desires a relationship with us.

- God is with us when we are happy and sad. God does not cause bad things to happen to us. He loves us very much.
- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- Having faith may not take away all of life’s struggles. It is because of these struggles, God promised to always “be present”; providing guidance and comfort in our time of need

God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace

- Our feelings help us know about ourselves and the world around us.
- God helps us know what belongs in our *Circle of Grace* by allowing us to experience peace, love or contentment when something or someone good comes into our *Circle of Grace*.

God helps us know what does not belong in our Circle of Grace

- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- The Holy Spirit prompts (alerts) us that something does not belong in our *Circle of Grace* by giving us “a funny or uncomfortable feeling” that something is not safe. This feeling is there because God wants us to be safe.

God helps us know when to ask for help from someone we trust.

- God gives us people in our lives to help us when we are troubled or struggling with a concern.
- God wants us to talk to trusted adults about our worries, concerns or “uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe and take the right action.

Circle of Grace Vocabulary

Words introduced in Kindergarten

Bullying: Repeatedly being mean to someone on purpose

Children of God: All people are made and loved by God.

Circle of Grace: The love and goodness of God which always surrounds me and all others.

Feelings: Something I sense inside myself (e.g. angry, sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed, confused, excited, peaceful, etc.) which gives me information about others or myself.

Grace: The gift of God's goodness and love to help me live as his child.

Holy: Special because of a connection with God.

Holy Spirit: God present with and within me. The Holy Spirit helps me to remember that I belong to God. The Holy Spirit helps me to experience and live God's love.

Respect: Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God.

Safe: I am safe when my body and my feelings are respected by me and by others.

Safe Touch: Touch that respects others and me.

Secret: A secret is something I know but do not tell.

Safe Secret: A secret is safe when it does not hurt others or me.

Unsafe Secret: A secret is unsafe when I think that someone, including me, might be hurt or get in trouble if I do not tell.

Signal: A sign that tells me something may be safe or unsafe. This may be internal or external.

Stoplight: A traffic light (red, yellow, green) that is a visual signal for keeping vehicles and people safe.

Trust: Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.

Trusted Adult: A grown-up who helps me to stay safe in my *Circle of Grace* and to respect others within their *Circle of Grace*.

Unsafe: Anything that causes harm to myself or others.

Unsafe Touch: Touch that is disrespectful and hurts, scares, or makes me feel uncomfortable or confused.

Words Introduced in First Grade

Symbol: A picture or object that stands for something else.

Words Introduced in Second Grade

No new words.

Words Introduced in Third Grade

Boundary: The borders or limits we need to keep ourselves safe within our *Circle of Grace*.

Treasured: We are so unique and precious that we could not be replaced in God's eyes.

Violate: To break a law, promise, or boundary.

Words Introduced in Fourth Grade

Social Media/Networking

Blog: An online journal. Personal stories or thoughts can be posted as in a personal journal. This is a public journal that anyone can access.

Chat Room: The name given to a place or page in a website or online service where people can chat with each other by typing messages which are displayed almost instantly on the screens of others who are in the chat room.

Instant Messaging (IM): Technology similar to that of chat rooms which notifies a user when a person is online allowing them to converse by exchanging text messages.

Location Application: An application (app) used in phones to find a location of a popular spot (restaurant, park etc.). People use the application to check in and it broadcasts the location to all of their friends.

Micro Blogging: This service allows users to give updates about what they are doing in less than 140 characters. In the near future, it may go to 280 characters.

Photo Sharing App: Captures, edits & shares photos, videos & messages with friends & family.

Social Networking Service and Websites: These services and websites are used to communicate with (a person) or search for information about (a person).

Video Sharing Service: This service allows users to watch videos posted by others and to upload videos of their own.

Mobile Video App: Allows you to send videos and pictures, both of which will disappear after about 10 seconds of a person viewing them. You can view them after the 10 seconds if you did a screen shot.

Other Terms

Cyber Bullying: Use of the internet, cell phone or other electronic device to send or post texts or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

E-mail: Electronic mail. Sending/ receiving a type written message from one screen to another.

Flaming: Sending a deliberately confrontational message to others on the internet.

Inappropriate Material: Pictures or words on the internet that makes one feel uncomfortable, scared, or that intentionally degrades a human person.

Netiquette: Courteous, honest, and polite behavior practiced on the internet.

Personal Contact Information: Information that allows an individual to be contacted or located in the physical world, i.e. a telephone number or an address.

Phishing: An identity theft scam in which criminals send out spam that imitates the look and language of legitimate correspondence from e-commerce sites. The fake messages generally link to websites that are similarly faked to look like the sites of respected companies. On the sites, users are directed to enter their personal information for authentication or confirmation purposes. The information, when submitted, goes to the thieves not to the “spoofed” company.

Pop Up: A term for unsolicited advertising that appears as its own browser window.

Predator: Someone who uses the internet or other means to obtain personal information about others with the intent to do harm.

Smart Phone: Is a mobile phone that offers advanced features like the internet, a camera and applications such as games and special interest information.

Texting: Sending a short text (typed) message and/or photo between cell phones or other handheld devices.

Webcam: A front facing video camera that attaches to a computer or is built into laptop.

Words Introduced in Fifth Grade

Media: Mass communication formats (music, TV, magazines, movies, videos, internet, computer games, books, advertisements, news, newspapers, radio, etc.) which provide education, information, entertainment, and advertising.

Inappropriate Media: Images, words that are spoken or written, that make one feel uncomfortable or scared. This type of media is disrespectful to people and would be something your parent/trusted adult would not approve.

Words Introduced in Sixth Grade

Admiration: A feeling of high regard or sense of awe.

Dream: A hope or aspiration which we imagine will become real.

Empathy: The ability to understand the feelings of another person.

Healthy: That which is sound and good for you in mind, body, and spirit.

Relationship: An authentic connection with God or others.

Response: Something said or done as a reaction or answer.

Talent: A special God-given ability or gift.

Value: A principle standard or quality considered desirable.

Violation: A break or infringement of another person's rights.

Words Introduced in Seventh Grade

Bullying: Any deliberate aggressive behaviors (physical, verbal or social) by a person or group with the intent to inflict harm on or make fun of another person.

Bystander: Someone who witnesses the bullying. They can have a negative or positive influence on the bullying behavior.

Cyber Bullying: The use of the internet, cell phones or other electronic devices to send or post texts or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

Disrespect: Treating with rudeness, insult, or lack of respect.

Words Introduced in Eighth Grade

Conscience: The gift from God that helps us to know the difference between right and wrong.

Modesty: The virtue that respects, honors, and protects privacy: the quality of avoiding extremes of emotion, action, dress, and language. Modesty respects my boundaries and the boundaries of others.

Morality: The way we put our beliefs into action for good.

Sexuality: Everything that makes us female or male. This includes feelings, attitudes, values, relationships, and ideas.

Words introduced in Middle School Alternate Lessons

Stress: A state of mental/emotional strain resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances

Pressure: Typically applied from an external source (peers, teachers, family, etc.) in a demand for high performance or healthy/unhealthy behavior,

Words Introduced in Ninth Grade

Exploit: To take unfair advantage of someone/some situation in order to get some benefit.

Forced Isolation: When someone forces/pressures another to be separated from others in order to gain control.

Secrecy: The condition of being hidden or concealed. The habit or practice of keeping secrets or maintaining privacy or concealment.

Sexting: Sexually explicit images or text messages sent by way of a phone. There may be legal consequences if one or both persons involved are minors.

Unequal Power: When one person has more power in a relationship. This can be in the area of age, size, position, resources, status or knowledge.

Words Introduced in Tenth Grade

Boundary: A border or limit that helps keep us safe and separate from another person or entity. Boundaries help define relationships. They are either concrete (physical/visual/audio) or abstract (emotions/beliefs/internal guidelines/rules).

Circle of Virtue: Our response to the invitation of God's grace by cultivating goodness and virtue in our lives.

Words Introduced in Eleventh Grade

Freely Chosen Violations: Every person is responsible for those violations they freely choose and know are wrong. We should never blame or accuse persons who are victims of abuse and manipulated or exploited in unequal relationships.

Moral Responsibility: As we grow into mature adults, we must take greater responsibility for protecting ourselves and others from violations of God's plan for our spiritual, sexual, and moral lives.

Offender: Someone who exhibits behaviors for the sole purpose of putting another person in a vulnerable position to be exploited/abused.

Survivor: A person who not only lives through but thrives despite abuse, affliction, or adversity.

Victim: A person who has suffered injury/harm (physical or emotional) by forces beyond his or her control and not of his or her personal responsibility.

Words Introduced in Twelfth Grade

No new words.

Words Introduced in the High School Alternate Lessons

Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery

Human Trafficking: Slavery in the form of *forced labor* or *sex trafficking* in which the victim is under 18 years of age, or is compelled by force, fraud or coercion, respectively, to provide labor or services, or to engage in a commercial sex act. There is no requirement that the victim be transported or travel across a *national* border.

Coercion: Threatening physical or non-physical harm (psychological or financial) against someone in order to manipulate them into doing something they do not want to do or would not normally do.

Modesty: A thing of the Past or Not?

Humility: Understanding of the truth of God and who we truly are; made in His image.

What is Your Motto?

Motto/Theme: A maxim adopted as a guide to one's conduct. This motto can be derived from our Christian or popular culture

Tech Savvy or Tech Safe?

Sexting: Sexually explicit images or texts sent by way of the phone. There may be legal consequences if one or both persons involved are minors.

Pornography: 1: The depiction of erotic behavior (pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement. 2: material (as books or a photograph) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement 3: the depiction of acts in a sensational manner so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction, *Merriam Webster*