

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training
Grade 11 – Lesson Plan

Philosophy

What is a Circle of Grace?

The Catholic Church 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 and live in the love of the Father, Son, and 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 and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.
- Children/Young People will identify all types of boundary violations.
- Children/Young People will demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.

¹ www.usccb.org, or <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>

Grade 11 Leader Guidelines

- Every leader should read the Philosophy, Goals and Key Concepts to better understand and prepare to teach the *Circle of Grace*. The Key Concepts review the essence of the curriculum, that God is always present in our *Circle of Grace* and desires an intimate relationship with His children.
- The time frame may vary depending on size of class, age of young people, amount of discussion, etc.
- Vocabularies with definitions are intended for the leader. The explanation of vocabulary should be integrated within the context of the lessons to assist the young people in their understanding of the *Circle of Grace* Program. The depth of the young people's understanding will depend upon their age and developmental stage. A master vocabulary list of the Circle of -Grace Program is included in all lesson plans. The pertinent vocabulary is listed in each lesson.
- If possible it is always "best practice" to have two adults in the room during the lesson due to the sensitive nature of the material.
- The 9-12 curriculum is formatted to be used in two ways:
 - ✓ The traditional way: lessons taught to the identified grade.
The lesson for grade 12 is only to be taught to seniors.
 - ✓ The second way: select any one of the 9-11 sections or alternate lessons to teach the class or group. Remember that all four lessons in grade 9 equal a section and must be taught together. One may consider presenting the 9th grade lessons as a retreat. Leaders will need to keep a record of what lesson is taught each year.
- Ongoing reinforcement of the concepts is encouraged throughout the year. Hopefully, the language of *Circle of Grace* will become a part of a positive culture of respect, care, and faith that will help protect our young people and help them to know what to do when they feel unsafe.
- Your Administrator, Religious Education Director or Youth Minister Director will be sending out a letter to all parents regarding *Circle of Grace*. Lesson specific parent information should be handed out as directed. The Parent Packet is included in the Program. Every parish/school is encouraged to provide parent education opportunities both to inform parents about the *Circle of Grace* program and to foster greater communication in families.
- Evaluations for each grade are to be completed and returned to the School Administrator or the Director of Religious Education/Formacion. The evaluations will be used to complete the Summary Evaluation that is used for ongoing improvement of the audit records.

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 troubles 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

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 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

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.

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 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 between cell phones or other handheld devices.

Webcam: A front facing video camera that attaches to a computer or is built into a 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 or words, spoken or written, that makes one feel uncomfortable, scared, or that intentionally degrade a human person.

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 vigorous in mind, body, and spirit.

Relationship: A 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 act, by a person or group, with the intent to inflict harm (physical or emotional) on 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 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.

Lesson

Circle of Grace

N.O.T.I.C.E. ~ When Boundaries Go Wrong

Sometimes young people reveal personal information or details about incidents that, in order to respect confidentiality, need to be handled outside of the group environment. If this happens, tell the young person, "Thank you for sharing that, _____. That sounds really important. I will talk to you about that later (at the end of class, at the break, as soon as humanly possible, etc.)." When this happens, be sure you talk to the young person at your first opportunity and alert the administration. Remember that you are the responsible reporter in cases of suspected abuse.

This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:

- Analyze and profess belief in the Creed
- Church teachings revealed in the Creed applies in our daily lives
- Human relationships are intended to be experiences of Divine Love
- Personal covenant with God
- Belief in the Communion of Saints
- Live responsibly as fully initiated members of the Church
- Discipleship is our call to holiness
- The relationship between the love of God our love of self and our love of others
- The image of God is in ourselves and others

Lesson Objectives

Young People will be able to:

1. Identify internal and external boundaries
2. Recognize the key behaviors of an offender
3. Understand that some offenders' behaviors are for the sole purpose of putting the youth in a vulnerable position in order to exploit/abuse them
4. Identify how best to respond and seek help in unsafe situations

Materials Needed

1. N.O.T.I.C.E. Handout for each student
2. Whiteboard or chalkboard
3. Activity materials: Sticky notes or index card and tape
4. *Optional: Unmasking Sexual Con Games 3rd Edition, Helping Teens Avoid Emotional Grooming and Dating Violence* by Kathleen M. McGee and Laura J. Buddenberg

Opening Prayer

God,
we ask for Your guidance and a little more:
guidance in relationships,
guidance in decisions,
guidance in love,
and guidance in worshiping You.
Amen.

Getting Started

Review

It is important that that youth understand the relationship between the Circle of Virtue and the Circle of Grace. The Circle of Grace is always present and never leaves us. Our Circle of Virtue is our response to our Circle of Grace and can change due to our free will.

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

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

Vocabulary: Review the below vocabulary.

1. **Freely Chosen Violations:** Every person is responsible for those violations they freely choose and know are wrong. We should never blame or accuse persons to the extent that they are victims of abuse and manipulated or exploited in unequal relationships.
2. **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.
3. **Offender:** Someone who exhibits behaviors for the sole purpose of putting another person in a vulnerable position to be exploited/abused.
4. **Survivor:** A person who not only lives through but thrives despite abuse, affliction, or adversity.
5. **Victim:** A person who has suffered injury/harm (physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual) by forces beyond his or her control and not of his or her personal responsibility.

Introduction

The reverence and respect we must have for all human life is based upon our creation in His divine image.

Review the following:

- Human beings are the only creatures on earth that God willed for their own sake. Humans are unique because we are made in the divine image enabling us to share in God's own life.
- "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good." (Genesis 1:27, 31 from the New American Bible)
- "Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2319)
- All persons possess God-given dignity, and inappropriately violating of the emotional, physical, sexual, and spiritual boundaries of a person is both harmful and potentially dangerous.

Continue:

- *Have the young people take a moment to think about someone they currently do not get along with or have not gotten along with in the past.*
- Now, remember that that person is also made in the image of God.
- *Pause for reflection...*
- Can you recognize a gift in them that you have not recognized before?
- How has this changed your perspective regarding this person?

Discussion: N.O.T.I.C.E. when boundaries are not honored

Today we are going to talk about boundaries gone wrong!

For today's lesson we will define an offender as someone who exhibits behaviors for the sole purpose of putting youth in a vulnerable position to be abused or exploited. Remember offenders cannot be identified based on their race, sex, age or their relationship to the targeted person. It is possible, however, to identify offenders by their behaviors.

The Acronym N.O.T.I.C.E. has key behaviors to look for when boundaries are violated. Sometimes someone may be unaware that they crossed a boundary. In these situations the person, when confronted about the behavior, usually acknowledges the mistake and changes the behavior. However, offenders, when confronted, usually become defensive or deny the concern. The offender's behaviors never reflect the reverence and respect of being made in God's divine image. Let's review:

N - Nontransparent (Secrets, secluded meetings and conversations).

O - Over Involvement (Involvement in a youth's life not consistent with role or relationship).

T - Telltale behaviors (Excess physical or emotional interactions and resource (gifts, trips etc.).

I - Inappropriate behaviors (Interactions are not consistent with the relationship/role).

C - Chips away at safeguards (Challenges or pressures a youth to break rules).

E - Engages youth in inappropriate adult behaviors/conversations (Face to face or electronically).

Opening Activity - Divide the youth into several groups. Distribute the N.O.T.I.C.E. questionnaire. Assign each group a couple of sections of the handout. Give them time to answer the questions and come up with some additional situations. Bring the youth back to a large group. Discuss each part of the acronym in the large group.

Choose one of the two activities

Activity 1: Detecting Offender Traits

- Have the young people get into 3 or more small groups.
- Give each group 2 to 3 N.O.T.I.C.E. behaviors.
- Have each group identify characters from TV or movies that use these traits/behaviors.
- Come together as a large group.
- Have each group report on their list of traits/behaviors.
- Record the overall results on a board for the group to view.
- Discuss:
 - Was it hard to identify these traits/behaviors?
 - If so, "Why?"
 - Are these traits/behaviors glamorized in the media?
 - If these characters were real persons would their traits/behavior be glamorous?
 - If no, then why do we find this entertaining in the media?

Activity 2: Name that Trait

1. Have the young people get into 3 groups

Group A – Place one N.O.T.I.C.E. trait/ behavior on each member (up to 6 people)

Group B – Each member of “Group B” will be instructed to respond appropriately to a trait/behavior that is posted on the back of a “Group A” member.

Group C – Observe the interaction between “Group A” and “Group B”. Once a trait/behavior is correctly identified, “Group C” will identify how NOT to respond to that trait/behavior. “Group C” will write this on the board/flip chart.

2. Pin/Tape a trait/behavior card on each individual of “Group A”. Have them stand in a way that they cannot read the cards on the backs of the other members of the group, possibly in a circle facing out, the traits/behaviors only show on the inside of the circle.
3. Instruct “Group B” to begin interacting with “Group A”.
4. The goal is for the “Group A” young person to guess which trait/behavior is pinned on their back.
5. “Group C” will be observing this interaction. Once a trait/behavior is identified, “Group C” will write on the board how **NOT** to respond to it.

Discuss:

- *Appropriate and inappropriate responses.*
Appropriate Example: Seek help when you know a secret that could harm someone.
Inappropriate Example: Never disclosing a secret that a friend is in a harmful relationship because you want to be loyal.
- *Feelings attached to these responses.*
- *Circumstances that may influence how we respond.*

Final Activity: Action Plan

Set aside the final minutes of the period for the young people to quietly think and pray about the following:

- *Invite the young people to re-examine their answers to the N. O.T.I.C.E. questionnaire in light of what they have learned about offenders.*
- *Tell them to identify three things they will do to change/eliminate the unhealthy behaviors/characteristics in their relationships.*
- *Ask them to identify several ways to respond and how to seek help from a trusted adult when they find themselves in unsafe situations.*
- *Have them write out a five step safety plan for freshman. It needs to include how to recognize inappropriate behaviors, how to protect and how to ask for help from a trusted adult. This plan needs to be turned into the leader.*

Closing Prayer

**God help me slow down
and be present to Your everlasting love.
Help me have REAL conversations with You
that guide and heal my brokenness.
Cultivate in my heart Your truth
and help me respond to Your Grace.
Give me courage to reject the lie
that You are a “distant” God.
Bless me with the gift of discernment,
knowing Your compassion and love is not relative
but eternal.
Your greatest desire from me
is my sincere “yes”.
Amen**

Opening Prayer

God,

We ask for Your guidance and a little more:
guidance in relationships,
guidance in decisions,
guidance in love,
and guidance in worshiping You.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

God help me slow down
and be present to Your everlasting love.
Help me have REAL conversations with You
that guide and heal my brokenness.
Cultivate in my heart Your truth
and help me respond to Your Grace.
Give me courage to reject the lie
that you are a “distant” God.
Bless me with the gift of discernment,
knowing Your compassion and love is not relative
but eternal.
Your greatest desire from me
is my sincere “yes”.

Amen

N.O.T.I.C.E. Handout

The acronym N.O.T.I.C.E. has key behaviors to look for when boundaries are violated. These behaviors never reflect the reverence and respect of being made in God's divine image. Below is a brief explanation/ example of each behavior. On the back of the handout answer the questions and list additional examples and situations.

N - Nontransparent (Secrets, secluded meetings and conversations)

- *What do you do if someone is asking you to keep your interactions or relationship a secret?*
- *What if they say no one will understand?*
- *What would your parents or trusted adult say about a secret interaction/relationship?*

O - Over involvement (Involvement in a youth's life not consistent with role or relationship)

- *What do you do when someone in authority treats you like a friend in a way that makes you uncomfortable?*
- *Someone in their twenties shows romantic interest in you. It is evident that they have more power, status and resources than you. What do you do?*
- *What is meant by someone being overly involved in a youth's life?*

T - Telltale behaviors (excess physical, emotional interactions and resource (gifts, trips, etc.)

- *What is the difference between a compliment and flattery?*
- *How do you know when physical contact is excessive?*
- *How do you know if something is freely given or if there are expectations attached?*

I - Inappropriate behaviors (Interactions are not consistent with the relationship/role)

- *What type of personal attention makes you uncomfortable?*
- *What do you think of an adult who dresses and acts like a teen?*
- *Can an authority or adult ever be your peer? If yes, why? If no, why?*

C - Chips away at safe guards (Challenges or pressures a youth to break rules)

- *Why do your parents or trusted adults have rules in place?*
- *Is someone thinking about his/her needs or yours if they pressure you to break the rules?*
- *Why would someone want you to believe that he/she is the ONLY one who understands you?*

E - Engages youth in inappropriate adult behaviors/conversations (Face to face or electronically)

- *What do you say to someone who wants you to look at a pornographic website?*
- *What if you continue to get midnight texts from an adult leader/ teacher? Should you tell someone? If so why? If not, why?*
- *What if a young adult invites you to a party? You get there and they offer you a beer. What do you do?*

Grade 11 Evaluation

Date _____

Parish/School _____ *City* _____

Leader _____ *Number of young people in class* _____

Each grade's curriculum was designed to meet the overall program objectives.

Please check if whether the objectives of the *Circle of Grace* Program were met.

1. YES ____ NO ____ Young People understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will be able to describe the *Circle of Grace* which God gives each of us.
3. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will be able to define and understand the N.O.T.I.C.E. acronym.
4. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will be able to identify and maintain appropriate boundaries.
5. YES ____ NO ____ Young People can identify types of boundary violations.
6. YES ____ NO ____ Young People can demonstrate how to take action if a boundary is threatened or violated.

Please list what worked well and any resources that you would like to share with others (use back if necessary).

Please list any suggestions that would improve lessons (use back if necessary).

Return to your School Administrator, Director of Religious Education, or Director of Youth Ministry.