

Circle of Grace Safe Environment Class

Grade K & 1 – 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 children 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 children 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 children 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 children understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where children 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 children understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

Circle of Grace Overview video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3H5WHemTw>

Lesson: The Stoplight and a Safety Plan

Lesson Objectives - Children will be able to:

1. Understand that God does not want or cause bad things to happen to them and that God is with them and for them even when they are hurting or sad.
2. Learn how to recognize when someone comes into their *Circle of Grace*.
3. Be able to recognize safe and unsafe situations/secrets in a person's *Circle of Grace*.
4. Name one or two trusted adults (in addition to their parents) whom they can seek out for help.
5. Practice asking for help.

Vocabulary

1. **Bullying:** Repeatedly being mean to someone on purpose.
2. **Feelings:** Something I sense inside myself (e.g. angry, sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed, confused, excited, peaceful, etc.) that gives me information about others or myself.
3. **Holy Spirit:** God present with and within me in a special way. The Holy Spirit helps me to remember that I belong to God. The Holy Spirit helps me to experience and live God's love.
4. **Safe:** I am safe when my body and my feelings are respected by me and by others.
5. **Safe Touch:** Touch that respects others and me.
6. **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.
7. **Signal:** A sign that tells me something may be safe or unsafe. This may be internal or external.
8. **Stoplight:** A traffic light (red, yellow, green) that is a visual signal for keeping vehicles and people safe.
9. **Trust:** Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.
10. **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*.
11. **Unsafe:** Anything that causes harm to myself or others.
12. **Unsafe touch:** Touch that is disrespectful and hurts, scares, or makes me feel uncomfortable or confused.

Opening Prayer

Holy Spirit, show us the way.

Be with us in all we think, do, and say. Amen.

***Getting Started:* Parents: Please have your child/ren stand and learn the Circle of Grace motion together:**

Let's stand and demonstrate our *Circle of Grace*.

Raise your hands about 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.

Know that God is in this space with you.

This is your Circle of Grace; you are in it.

***Sing and Dance:* I have a Friend in Jesus**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65Yk8-yJxEg>

Activity: Stoplight

Parents: Have your child color their stoplight (see attached Stoplight image). Make sure they use red, yellow, and green for the lights.

Discussion:

Review the meaning of a stoplight by asking:

Why do we have stoplights? *Pause for answers.* The reason we have stoplights is to protect people and keep them safe.

What does each color of the stoplight mean? (Stop, Be Careful, and Go Ahead.)

Most of the time you know what is safe and good to allow in your Circle of Grace. Sometimes, though, you need others who respect your Circle of Grace to help you know what is safe and what is not, people like our parents or teachers. God has given each of us our own kind of signal to keep us safe and protected. Sometimes these signals are called feelings. Our feelings are one of the main ways the Holy Spirit helps to guide us.

Continue by saying: Let's review how the three colors of a stoplight can remind us of the signals God gives us to help keep us safe and protected.

- a. Green signal - Means GO AHEAD. Some things are definitely safe. Some examples are telling the truth, being kind and respectful, helping others, and caring about others. You are also safe when others respect your body and feelings. Could you name some other things that would always be safe to do or let someone else do with you?

- b. Red Signal - Means STOP. Some things are unsafe and always mean trouble. (Parents: Be sure to spend some time reviewing general concepts of bullying. Ask the children to define it and what does it look like.) Some examples of bullying (being mean to someone on purpose), are lying, hitting, fighting, etc. Can you help me think of other things that are never good to do or let someone do to you? When this happens, tell someone that you trust, like your mom, dad, leader, or other trusted adult.
- c. Yellow Signal - Means BE CAREFUL. Sometimes you can't tell if a situation is safe or unsafe. You might feel confused or unsure about it. These are like a yellow signal. It may seem like just a funny feeling in your heart or tummy. When this happens, tell someone that you trust, like your mom, dad, leader, or other trusted adult.

Activity:

- Have your child/children use their Stoplight for this activity.
- Choose different color situations and vary the order.
- After reading a situation, give children a moment to think and then ask them to point to the red, green, or yellow light. Some situations, though clearly red to adults, may be unclear (yellow) from a child's perspective. This activity will help children identify their own confusing feelings and to understand that they should talk to a trusted adult. Allow time for children to discuss their feelings connected with these situations.

a. GREEN SITUATIONS:

1. Your mom or dad gives you a hug when you are sad. (loved, comforted)
2. You are at the doctor and your mom is with you. The doctor checks your body to make sure it is healthy. (safe, secure, embarrassed)
3. You see your friend crying and you ask if you can give her/him a hug. (sad, caring).
4. Your grandmother/grandfather wipes your tears when you fall down and hurt yourself. (loved, comforted, safe)
5. You tell the leader when you accidentally break something in your classroom. (embarrassed, sorry, guilty, happy that you told)
6. You decide not to laugh when a classmate falls down and cries even though your friends are laughing. (sad, happy that you did not make fun of them)

b. YELLOW/RED SITUATIONS: (Always talk to a trusted adult.)

1. You are playing outside your house when a group of older kids come by and ask your name. They say they will give you a computer game if you go with them (cautious, scared).
2. Your big brother's friend wants you to play a video game your mom or dad told you not to play.(worried, afraid of getting into trouble, excited to play the game)
3. You push someone out of line so you can be first. (mad, selfish)
4. You are at a friend's birthday party when your friend says, "Let's all go downstairs so we can play on the computer without my mom or dad around". (pressured, curious, worried)
5. You are at a family party. Someone asks you to sit on his/her lap, but you don't want to. (pressured, mad, unsure)
6. Your friend's big brother/sister wants you to do something you don't want to do because it makes you uncomfortable (pressured, confused).

Safety Plan

Discussion:

1. Can you name a person who loves you and helps you to stay safe? Encourage the children to name adults in addition to their mom and dad.
2. These are people whom you can ask to help you if you are unsafe or confused. We call these people trusted adults.
3. Give each child a piece of paper and crayons or markers.
4. Instruct the children to think of one or two trusted adults besides mom or dad whom they could ask for help.
5. Draw a picture of each of your trusted adults. Remind children that mom and dad may be trusted adults even if they are not in the picture.
6. Sometimes children may pick someone who is not available or inappropriate.

Role-Play: How to Ask a Trusted Adult for Help.

1. Explain: Role-play is a way to practice something new.
2. Select a situation that the children think they might need to talk to or ask for help for a trusted adult.
3. Today we are going to practice asking for help when... (situation). (Example: Today we are going to practice asking for help when someone wants me to get in their car and I don't think my mom and dad want me to.)
4. Ask the children to brainstorm ideas of how they would tell a trusted adult they felt unsafe. Encourage the children to clearly describe why they feel unsafe. Examples: "My mom told me to wait for her." "We might not go straight to my house." "I don't know him." "I feel anxious around them."
5. Have the children practice role-playing with a trusted adult using the "How to Ask for Help" worksheet.
 - a. Children look at their parent or trusted adult.
 - b. Children say aloud: "I need your help. I don't feel safe."
 - c. Children say aloud: "Please help me because... (Example: Please help me because I don't think my mom or dad want me to go with her. I don't know her.)"
 - d. Children say aloud: "Thank You."

Closing Prayer

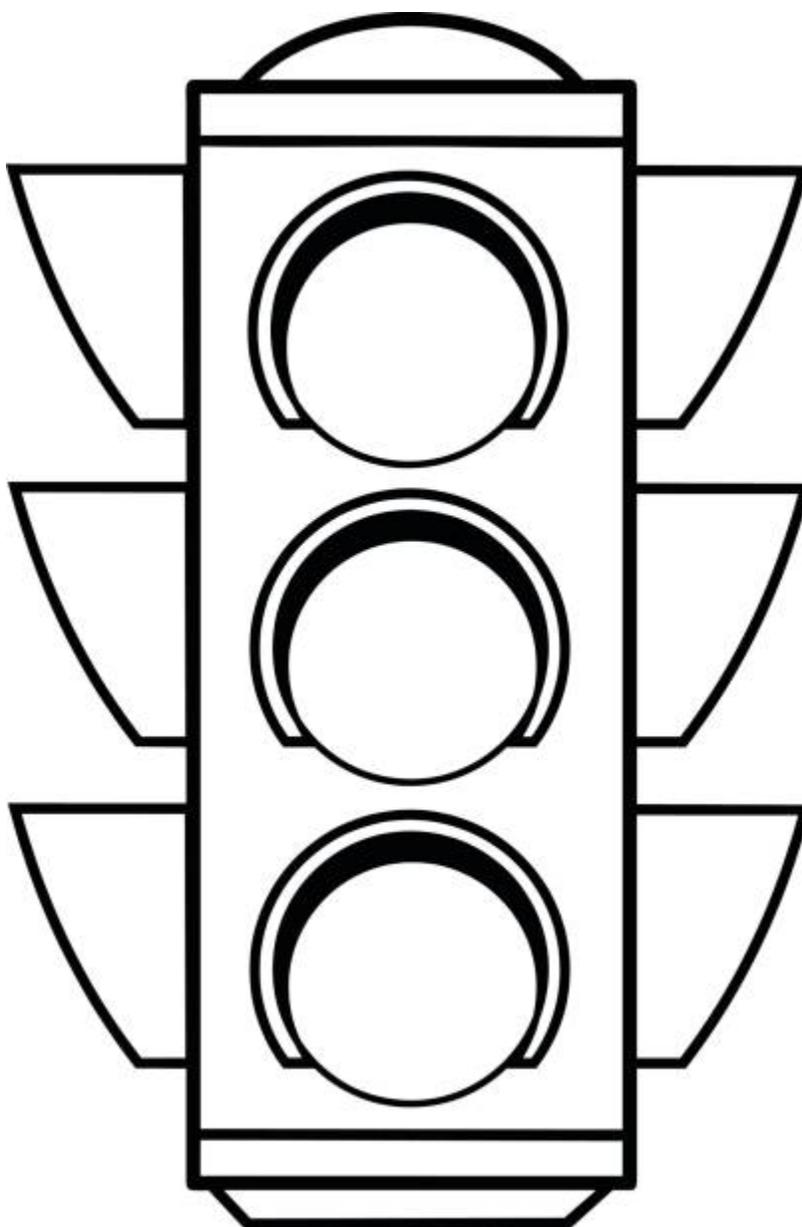
**Thank you, God, for always being with me in my Circle of Grace.
Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit who helps me know what is good.
Thank you for giving me people who care about me and want me to be safe.
Amen.**

Closing Song and Dance:

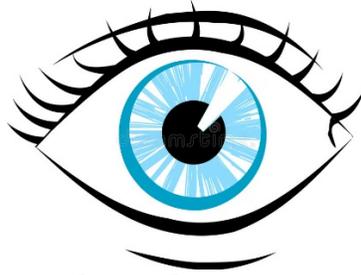
I'm Trusting You God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VDpHibftHs>

My Stoplight



HOW TO ASK FOR HELP



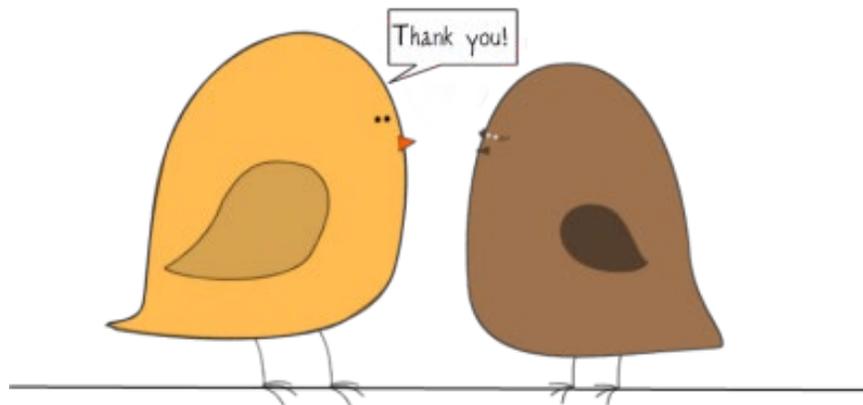
Look at the person.



Say to the person, “I need help. I do not feel safe.”



Tell the person why you do not feel safe.



Tell the person, “Thank you!”

Grade K & 1 Parent Evaluation

Date: _____

Parish: *St. Stephen Catholic Community*

Parent: _____ *Number of Children Participating* _____

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

1. YES _____ NO _____ Children understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. YES _____ NO _____ Children will be able to describe the *Circle of Grace* which God gives each of us.
3. YES _____ NO _____ Children will be able to identify and maintain appropriate boundaries.
4. YES _____ NO _____ Children can identify types of boundary violations.
5. YES _____ NO _____ Children can demonstrate how to take action if a boundary is threatened or violated.

Please list what worked well.

Please list any suggestions that would improve lessons.

This evaluation is online at:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe5VtghK7v5efBuGIKaYIjr6hkpTFx45fw0zC71INOj7HdJEg/viewform?usp=sf link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe5VtghK7v5efBuGIKaYIjr6hkpTFx45fw0zC71INOj7HdJEg/viewform?usp=sf_link)