

Circle of Grace Lessons

It is important that Circle of Grace lessons are taught by a person who has a relationship with the child. This may be the homeroom teacher, religion teacher, or school counselor.

Statistics show that 90% of abuse occurs by people known to the child (parents, step-parents, siblings, extended family, friends, coaches, teachers, etc.). Being in a group with peers allows children to better receive the age-appropriate lessons about boundary violations, how to ask for help and provides an opportunity to ask questions.

Even with a close parent/child relationship, children may be hesitant to talk to their parents about abuse. One of the most successful components of *Circle of Grace* is having children choose several trusted adults, in addition to their parents, to turn to if something happens. When the child and parents have identified several other trusted adults a bigger safety net is developed to protect them if abuse occurs.

Circle of Grace

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

Outline of the Program

Circle of Grace lessons must be taught exactly as written to fully meet the requirements of the USCCB for child and youth protection. They cannot be altered or replaced by a lesson on a similar topic.

- Children in Pre-K through Gr. 3 and Gr. 6 have multiple lessons. Psychologists identify children as especially vulnerable when they are younger or in a time of transition. These lessons should be scheduled within two weeks of each other
- Grades 4, 5, 7 and 8 are taught *Circle of Grace* through the lens of a specific topic. These lessons take one class and still fully meet the requirements of the USCCB for child protection..

Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 2

What is the *Circle of Grace*?

The Stoplight: Feelings, Touch, Secrets and Safety Plan

Grade 3 - What is the *Circle of Grace*?

Boundaries, limits of our *Circle of Grace* and Action Plan

Grade 4 - Internet Safety

Grade 5 - Understanding the Influence of the Media on our *Circle of Grace*

Grade 6 - *Circle of Grace*: Pieces of the Puzzle

Safe Relationships, Boundaries, Safety PLAN

Grade 7 - Saying "No" to Disrespect: Honoring

Everyone's *Circle of Grace*

Grade 8 - How to be Morally Responsible in

Today's Culture

Middle School Alternate Lessons

- ◇ Coping with Stress and Pressure
- ◇ Honoring Relationships

High School Lessons

Please see our brochure entitled "Guide for Using *Circle of Grace* in High School classes, R.E. and Youth Ministry".

If you have any Circle of Grace ideas or stories to share (successes or failures!) or if you have a question or need some assistance, please contact:

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Circle of Grace

Guide for Using *Circle of Grace* in Five-Day Schools



Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8

Archdiocese of Omaha

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For 5-day School Administrator and Teachers

When planning for child protection lessons, every teacher's first concern is, "How am I ever going to fit one more thing into an already overfilled calendar?".

Since *Circle of Grace* is faith-based, the lessons are built on Catholic teachings that complement your Religion curriculum: respect for ourselves and others as children of God, Creation, the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, conscience formation, responsible relationships and the sanctity of life are just a few.

Circle of Grace is easy for educators to teach. In fact, the lessons are no different than following their regular religion lesson plans! The success of *Circle of Grace* depends on the teacher's ability to teach that God is truly present in our lives and desires to keep His children safe. The curriculum does not ask them to teach any sex education or human physiology.

Faculty members come to us with a variety of gifts. It is important they have the tools they need to teach these essential lessons which will ensure that it will be done appropriately. *Circle of Grace* provides these tools for teachers of each grade-level.

There is a strong parent component that respects parents as the primary catechists of their children. In addition to parent letters included with lessons, there are *Parents First* educational fliers for each grade. These fliers provide parents information and resources to help answer questions their children may ask about human dignity, sacred relationships and sexuality in an age-appropriate manner.

Your leadership is very important in implementing *Circle of Grace* and keeping the passion alive in future years. When you begin, it helps to build excitement by sharing program information in the parish bulletin, newsletters and social media. **It is good to remind adults each year of our common goal to create a safe environment in our parishes and schools and to teach our children and youth how to keep themselves safe in the world they live and navigate each day.**

Instructors also need to have their enthusiasm for child protection reignited each year before teaching *Circle of Grace*. It is a great topic to discuss at an in-service meeting. It can be combined with a reminder that since we are teaching faith, any lesson or discussion all year can bring forth a disclosure of abuse. It can also be a good time to review with teachers how to handle a disclosure by a student. Check for mandatory reporting laws in your state.

It is no wonder teachers say *Circle of Grace* lessons have a high level of student participation and enthusiasm because it shows how our faith affects every relationship in our lives. **You will see that it won't be long before *Circle of Grace* becomes part of your school culture.**

Circle of Grace brings God and our Catholic beliefs into the center of child protection by teaching:

- God's presence and assistance in difficult and confusing situations as an essential component in its Pre-K- gr. 12 curriculum.
- a philosophy that can be used at all times which reinforces God's real presence in our lives, respect for self and others, and skills for good decision making.
- the sacredness of each person and how relationships are called to be experiences of divine love.

***Circle of Grace* lessons are taught in relationship: the student's relationship with God, God's relationship with them, and their relationship with others in their family and community.**

Circle of Grace makes your job easier!



Circle of Grace is easy to manage by providing your staff with the lessons and tools they need to teach.

- **Philosophy and goals are consistent throughout the Pre-K- Gr. 8 curriculum, so you and all of your teachers are on the same page!** The Catholic teachings that are being taught are listed at the beginning of each lesson, helping you see where *Circle of Grace* may reinforce or enhance your current religion lessons.
- **Comprehensive and self-contained materials for each grade.** Leader guidelines, key concepts, goals and objectives, vocabulary, list of materials needed, complete lessons with opening and closing prayers, lesson development and activities, copy masters of handouts, activity sheets, pre- and post- tests (in appropriate grades), parent letters and a lesson evaluation.
- **This means as an administrator, you can copy or email one file to teachers with all the materials needed for each grade,** keeping you from searching all over to find the correct parent letters, handouts, etc.
- **An administrator's section is included with resources just for you,** including help with implementation, directions for use with special needs students, suicide prevention and how to handle a disclosure of abuse by a child. It has additional information about the program, common questions parents ask, abuse and neglect recognition and other topics that you can send directly to parents, teachers and others in the parish/school community.