

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training Grade 10 - 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 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.

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

Grade 10 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/Formation. The evaluations will be used to complete the Summary Evaluation that is used for ongoing improvement of the program and for 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 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

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

Levels of Intimacy and Influence

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:

- Church teachings revealed in the Creed apply 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 Objective

Young People will be able to:

1. Identify and define the three levels of relationships which determine boundaries
2. Identify indicators of concern/boundary violations of each level of relationship
3. Know appropriate responses to boundary violations (concrete and abstract)
4. Know appropriate responses to having been previously exploited or abused by someone.

Materials Needed

1. Copy of Levels of Intimacy and Influence Handout for each student
2. Very large piece of paper
3. File cards
4. Whiteboard/Blackboard
5. (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 the young people 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 others.

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

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.

Lesson Development

It would be helpful to have a description of each level displayed for the youth.

Discussion

Today we are going to discuss the relational boundaries of our *Circle of Grace*.

There are three levels of relationships that determine boundaries:

The Familial Level is typically the most intimate. In most families intimacy usually means a high level of trust. Unfortunately, some families do not trust each other very much. We know families are usually the place where the most historical/current relational interactions occur. We usually do not “choose” who is in our family. Families are where we first learn about boundaries. The desire to have loving connections with our family is core to our being.

The Personal Level typically has relationships that are chosen such as friends. Friends are peers with whom we feel safe and share common interests. These relationships usually have a balance of power, status and resources, i.e. same age, same grade level and interests.

The Institutional Level relationships are based on our community, school or groups to which we belong. This is where groups gather who have something in common such as churches, neighborhoods, schools, sporting or club activities. This level has both adults and children/youth working together for a common goal. This level usually has adults who are in charge of the safety and well being of the children/youth.

Activity - Levels of Intimacy and Influence

1. *Divide the youth into several groups.*
 2. *Pass out the Levels of Intimacy and Influence Handout.*
 3. *Give them time to discuss the questions on the handout and then bring them back to a large group.*
 4. *Review the questions allowing each group to give input.*
 5. *As a large group review the additional questions:*
 - *Are there behaviors you would do in one level but not another? Why? What are they?*
 - *Is it ok for some people to be in several levels? If so, why is it ok? When is it not ok?*
 - *What do we mean when we say each level has unique boundaries?*
 - *How would you describe a boundary?*
-

Activity1- Step Right or Step Out!

1. *Use a very large piece of paper to draw the three levels of Intimacy and Influence. It needs to be large enough for the youth to stand on during the activity.*
2. *Divide the group into two or three teams. Each team will come up with 10 situations/interactions keeping in mind one of the three levels (Familial, Personal or Institutional) and write them on a file card. (Allow about 10-15 minutes.)*
3. *The teams then exchange the stack of ten cards.*
4. *The teams take turns picking a card and having a team member go and stand in the level appropriate for the situation/interaction. If they are wrong they must step out! You can either have a group of judges or have the leader determine if they are in the right level. If they are accurate they get to stay in the level. The team that has the highest number of members standing in the levels wins.*
5. *Lead a discussion about the activity*

Discussion – Violations *Circle of Grace* – Circle of Virtue

- We have just completed the “Step Right or Step Out Activity”. This activity helped us understand the different levels of intimacy and influence. We have also briefly discussed boundaries. Boundaries are borders or limits that help keep us safe and separate from another person or entity. They help define our relationships. They can be concrete (physical/ visual/ audio) or abstract (emotions/ beliefs/ internal guidelines/ rules). Many times a situation can have both concrete and abstract boundaries. Example: Someone sees the sign posting the 40 mile speed limit and decides to decrease their speed. The concrete boundary is the posted sign and the abstract boundary is the knowledge that you may get a speeding ticket. Many times we are unclear if a behavior is crossing a boundary. It is important to listen/discern what our “gut” is telling us. This is the prompting of the Holy Spirit to make safe choices and seek help when we are unclear.
- Now let’s brainstorm behaviors which violate our concrete or abstract boundaries within our *Circle of Grace*. These boundary violations could happen at any or all of the relationship levels.
- *Write the young people’s responses to the following questions on a board or a flip chart. Be sure to include key physical, emotional and sexual violations such as bodily harming someone, bullying and sexual exploitation/abuse. In question one and two address that the examples can have both concrete and abstract boundaries. Before moving on to the subsequent question have them vote on the current question’s top three responses that impact teens.*

1. How do people violate an individual's concrete boundaries?

Examples: destruction of property, bullying, rumors, sexting

2. How do people violate an individual's abstract boundaries?

Examples: ignoring or excluding someone, posting hateful messages

3. Can someone violate his/her own boundaries? If so, how do they do this and why?

Examples: Cutting, alcohol/ drug abuse, suicide attempts

4. Are boundary violations common when using technology? What are these violations?

Is it easier to violate a boundary using technology or face to face? Why is it easier?

Examples: forwarding hateful texts, sexually suggestive interactions with an online "friend", posing as someone else on a social network

5. Name some behaviors that indicate a person has an underdeveloped or no sense of boundaries.

Examples: texts you at all hours, considers everyone they encounter online as their friend, will do anything to fit in to be popular.

6. What are some ways a person can seek help if he/she has already been exploited/abused in a relationship? (Be sure to highlight the importance of talking to a trusted adult about your feeling and how to stay safe. Emphasize that no matter what has happened in the past, we deserve to be safe and loved because we are children of God.)

Optional Activity – “Collage of your *Circle of Grace*”

Each *Circle of Grace* can be supported or invaded by the world around us. The following activity should allow youth to visually identify ways in which the world either supports or invades the Circle of God’s Grace that surrounds us.

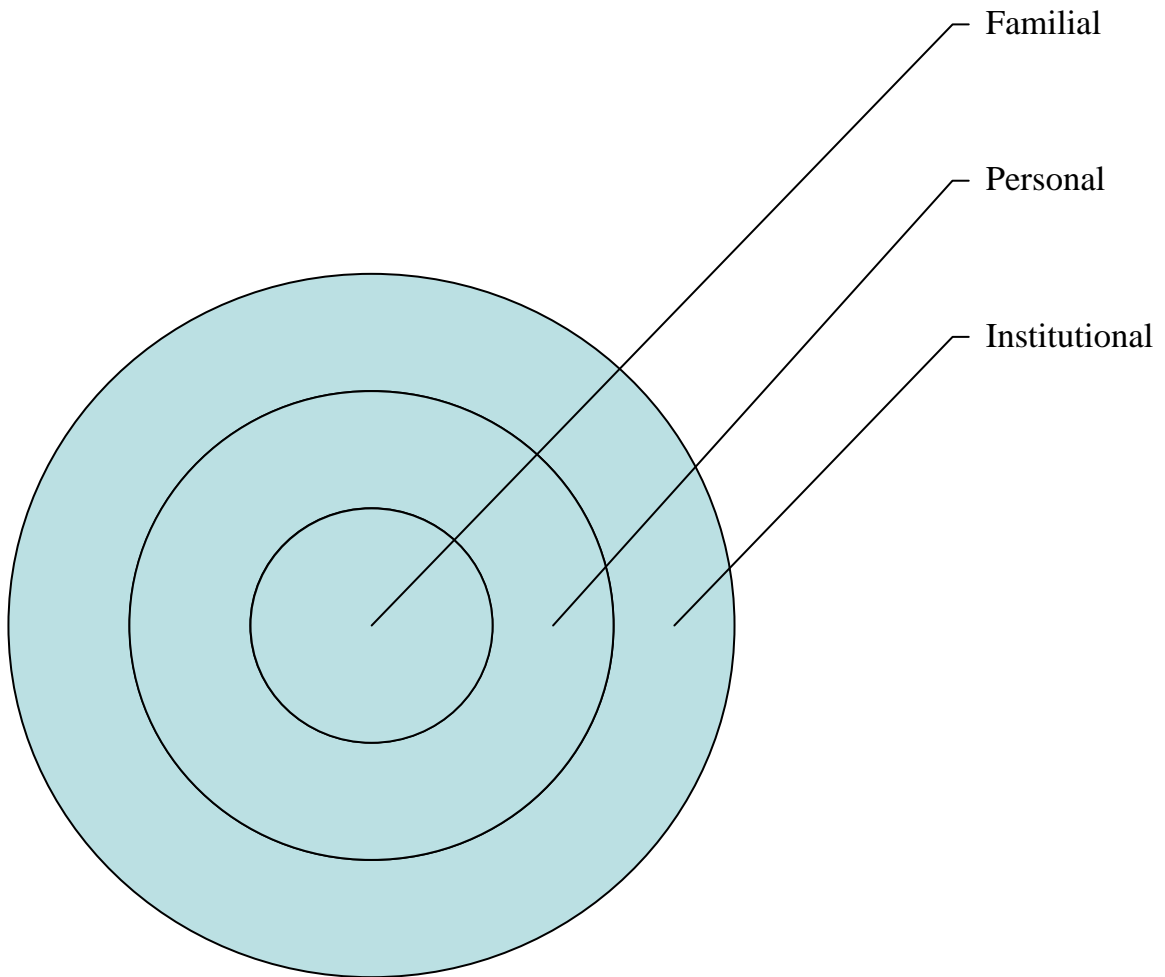
- *Give each young person a piece of paper and have markers available. Invite youth to draw a large circle.*
- *Using the magazines, have the young person make a collage of words and images that belong in their Circle of Grace. Show the values and images that best express what God wants for you.*
- *Next, have youth clip words or phrases that violate their Circle of Grace, and glue those on the outside of the Circle.*
- *Encourage them to use the overhead/handout as a guide in making their collage.*
- *Have young people share with the large or small groups two things that they have in their collage that belong inside their Circle of Grace as well as two things that belong outside their Circle of Grace.*

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

Levels of Intimacy and Influence Handout



- a. Is your *Circle of Grace* different in each relational level? If so, how?
- b. How is your *Circle of Grace* similar in each level?
- c. What do each level's boundaries do to protect you?
- d. List people in each of your levels.

Put your answers on the back of your handout.

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

Grade 10 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 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 identify and maintain appropriate boundaries.
4. YES _____ NO _____ Young People can identify types of boundary violations.
5. 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.