

High School Circle of Grace at Home Lesson- COVID

A.C.T.I.O.N.- Steps Needed When Concerns Don't Go Away



Parents and Teens,

The Church teaches that human relationships are to be experiences of Divine Love. We see the image of God reflected in ourselves and others. Circle of Grace helps us understand the relationship between the love of God, our love of self and our love of others.

- God gives each of us a *Circle of Grace* in which He is always “Present”. How do we know He is “Present”?
- God is “Present” because He desires a relationship with us. What does a relationship with God look like?

Thank you for doing this Circle of Grace lesson together, parent and teen, to help you understand both the world in which our teens live and the love of a parent and their need to protect their child.

- Recognize teens are pressured to ignore taking actions in unsafe situations.
- Identify appropriate responses when teens are confronted with inappropriate interactions or violations.

Getting Started

First we are going to talk about how to take action in unsafe situations. Sometimes it is hard to know what to do when we are in an uncomfortable situation. We may worry about what others think, about making someone mad or about becoming unpopular by going against the crowd. Let's look at the acronym A.C.T.I.O.N. It will help us identify and discuss what to do in unsafe situations.

A – Attention: WHY you are uncomfortable?
C – Conscience: WHAT is it telling you?
T - Trust your instincts: The Holy Spirit PROMPTS us to be safe.
I – Information: What are friends or family saying about the person/situation?
O – Options: Look at all CHOICES. Which ones will keep you safe?
N - No one is alone: SEEK help from a trusted adult!

Let's discuss each of the letters of the acronym.

Attention: WHY are you uncomfortable?

Pay attention to who or what makes you uncomfortable. Are you uncomfortable with what someone else is saying or doing? With an activity or situation? Did someone change plans without telling you?

Example: You tell your parents that you are going to a movie with a friend. When the friend picks you up she tells you the plans have changed and the two of you are now going to a party instead. What are some other examples? Choose one that shows the safe way out and another that is a poor choice and not a safe ending.

Conscience: WHAT is it telling you?

Is someone asking you to do something that you know, deep down, is wrong?

Example: Some friends are over at your house. One friend suggests going to an unpopular classmate's social networking page and pretend to be someone who is “interested” in him/her. You know this is lying and may hurt someone, but you worry what your friends will think. Why is it so difficult to stand up for what is right? What are some other examples? Choose one that shows the safe way out and another that is a poor choice and not a safe ending.

Trust your instincts: The Holy Spirit PROMPTS us to be safe.

If you think it might not be safe then it probably isn't. Those thoughts and gut feelings are promptings from the Holy Spirit to help us stay safe. Pay attention to the internal warning signs that someone or something is not safe.

Example: Your friend has been distant lately. She seems depressed and has dropped out of most activities. You have noticed that she is wearing long sleeve shirts even when it is warm outside. You are concerned that she might be cutting. What should you do? Should you listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit or ignore it? What other information do you

need? What are some examples? Choose one that shows the safe way out and another that is a poor choice and not a safe ending.

Information: What are your friends and family saying about the person/situation?

It is important to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and to those people in our lives that care for us.

Example: You are currently “going out” with an upper classmate. One of your friends saw him romantically kissing someone else. If your friend were to tell you, would you believe it? What might one of your trusted adults say about this? What are some other examples? Choose one that shows the safe way out and another that is a poor choice and not a safe ending.

Options: Look at all your CHOICES, which choices will keep you safe?

It is important to look at all the options when in a difficult situation. There may be several safe choices.

Example: You are at a party with a friend and a lot of other people you don’t know. Someone starts taking pictures with a phone asking for suggestive poses. When asked you say something funny to get out of the situation. What are some other ways you could handle the situation? What are some other examples? Choose one that shows the safe way out and another that is a poor choice and not a safe ending.

No one is alone: SEEK help from a trusted adult.

Many teens think no one understands what they are going through. When you are confused or in an uncomfortable situation it is important to discuss it with an adult you trust.

Example: Your family has been going through a difficult time lately and there is a lot of arguing at home. It has disrupted your sleep and you are finding it difficult to concentrate at school. You finally get the courage to make an appointment with the school counselor. Who are some other adults you could go to? What would you tell a friend to do who was having this problem? What are some other examples? Choose one that shows the safe way out and another that is a poor choice and not a safe ending.

Discussion:

How hard is it to make safe choices? Do adults see safety differently than youth? Why or why not? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit can prompt us to be safe as the *Circle of Grace* concept tell us?

It is important for young people to understand that our Circle of Grace is always present and never leaves us. Remember that our openness to having an intimate relationship with God will allow one to hear the Holy Spirit’s prompting more clearly in unsafe situations.



Final Summary:

Below are some ways a young person can seek help if they are pressured or experience violations of their personal boundaries.

Please have both teens and parents share ideas on how to be safe in each of the below:

- Listen to your gut, it is the Holy Spirit prompting you that something is wrong. Learn to recognize the settings and interactions that can get you into uncomfortable situations.
- When someone pressures you, try to take yourself out of the situation.
- You can free yourself from unhealthy relationships by seeking help from a trusted adult.
- Tell someone who can help you. Talk to someone you trust – parent, professional, counselor, or other trusted adults.
- Along with your parent, choose three Trusted Adults that you could contact for help if your parents were not able to be there or help you.
- If you have any questions about the *Circle of Grace* lesson, please contact your parish or school for assistance.