

Diocese of Superior
Safe Environment Program Parent Guide
Creating a Circle of Grace

Dear Parent,

Out of concern for all God's people and in response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, we have a curriculum for the safe environment education of children and young people supported and mandated by Bishop James P. Powers, Bishop of the Diocese of Superior.

Diocese/eparchies are to maintain "safe environment" programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for minors, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to sustain and foster a safe environment for minors. Dioceses/eparchies are to make clear to clergy and member of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons with regard to their conduct with minors.

--Article 12 – Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

With the approval of Bishop James P. Powers, the Diocese of Superior selected a children's training program called *Circle of Grace* from the Archdiocese of Omaha. *Circle of Grace* aims to equip our children and young people by arming them with essential knowledge and skills grounded in the richness of our faith. This curriculum helps children and young people to understand their own (and other's) dignity in mind, body, and spirit.

Circle of Grace lessons are to be made available to all children enrolled in our schools and religious education programs annually. We are sorry that your child was not present to participate in this year's lesson. We ask that you take the time to review the materials included in this packet and that you provide appropriate information and guidance to your children regarding keeping themselves safe. Included in this packet are:

- What is our *Circle of Grace*?
- Grade Level Lesson Content/Objectives
- Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect – Helpful information for all adults

Should you have any questions, please contact your religious education coordinator or your Catholic school principal. Questions may also be addressed to the Diocesan Director of Safe Environment, Bonita Thom at 715 394 0206 or BThom@catholicdos.org.

What is our Circle of Grace?

Key Concepts

God gives each of us a *Circle of Grace* where He is always “Present”

*You can find your Circle of Grace by raising your hands above your head,
then bring your outstretched arms down slowly.
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 always in this space with you. This is your Circle of Grace.*

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 experiencing 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 tells 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.
- God wants us to talk to trusted grownups about our worries, concerns or “funny/uncomfortable” feelings so they can help us be safe.

Requested Parent Action

Because your child(ren) did not participate in this year’s *Circle of Grace* Safe Environment lesson, we ask that you spend time discussing the above information with them. This is the foundational information for the *Circle of Grace* program. There are full lessons for each grade level that adds information that is both developmental and age appropriate.

Once you have discussed the *Circle of Grace* concepts list above, please move on to the grade level information found in succeeding pages.

Grade	Catholic Teaching, Goals & Objectives for the Child
Kindergarten	<p>EVERYONE HAS A CIRCLE OF GRACE This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are all Children of God • As Children of God, we are unique and loved by Him • Jesus teaches us how to love and respect God and others and self • We are all called to do good <p>Lesson Goals –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will come to understand and/or describe the concept of Circle of Grace. • Children will be better able to identify safe and unsafe situations. • Children will demonstrate how to take action if their Circle of Grace (COG) boundaries have been threatened or crossed. <p>Lesson Objectives Children will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate his/her own Circle of Grace. • Describe what makes a person's Circle of Grace a holy space. • Identify the behaviors appropriate for the Circle of Grace. • 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. • Learn how to identify when someone comes into their Circle of Grace. • Be able to recognize safe and unsafe situations/ secrets in a person's Circle of Grace. • Name one or two trusted adults (in addition to their parents) whom they can seek out for help. • Practice asking for help.
Grade 1	<p>YOUR CIRCLE OF GRACE AND OTHERS This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are all Children of God • As Children of God, we are unique and loved by Him • Jesus teaches us how to love and respect God and others and self • We are all called to do good <p>Lesson Goals –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will come to understand and/or describe the concept of Circle of Grace. • Children will be better able to identify safe and unsafe situations. • Children will demonstrate how to take action if they feel unsafe or are not sure if someone or something is unsafe <p>Lesson Objectives Children will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate his/her own Circle of Grace. • Describe what makes a person's Circle of Grace a holy space. • Identify the behaviors appropriate for the Circle of Grace. • 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. • Learn how to recognize when someone comes into their Circle of Grace. • Be able to recognize safe and unsafe situations/secrets in a person's Circle of Grace. • Name two or three trusted adults (in addition to their parents) who they can seek out for help. • Practice asking for help.

<p>Grade 2</p>	<p>BEING SAFE IN YOUR CIRCLE OF GRACE This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are all Children of God • As Children of God, we are unique and loved by Him • Jesus teaches us how to love and respect God and others and self • We are all called to do good <p>Lesson Goals –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will come to understand and/or describe the concept of Circle of Grace. • Children will be better able to identify safe and unsafe situations. • Children will demonstrate how to take action if their Circle of Grace (COG) boundaries have been threatened or crossed. <p>Lesson Objectives Children will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate their own Circle of Grace. • Describe what makes a person's Circle of Grace a holy space. • 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. • Learn how to identify when someone comes into their Circle of Grace. • Be able to recognize safe and unsafe situations/secrets in a person's Circle of Grace. • Name two or three trusted adults (in addition to their parents) from whom they can seek out help.
<p>Grade 3</p>	<p>SACREDNESS AND BOUNDARIES This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is the Son of God • God takes care of us and is always with us • God created all human beings in His image, and He saw this as very Good • God calls us to a loving relationship with Himself and with others • The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. He can be understood as the love of the Father for the Son and the love of the Son for the Father • The Holy Spirit helps us to live as Jesus did, making good choices • God's creation is to be respected and as Christians we accept responsibility to care for it • Jesus' life is a model for our own • God calls us to be responsible for our actions • Jesus modeled the importance of serving others • God teaches us to lead a healthy life and to make good choices <p>Lesson Goals –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of COG will be reinforced <p>Lesson Objectives Children will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and explain that as Children of God we are treasured and filled with grace. God's presence is within us and around us creating our own Circle of Grace. • Demonstrate their own Circle of Grace. • Understand that God does not want or cause bad things to happen to them and that God is with them when they are hurt or sad. • Identify what behaviors are appropriate within a Circle of Grace showing that they treasure themselves and others as Children of God. • Recognize boundary violations and what action is needed • Be able to identify trusted adults in addition to their parents.

<p>Grade 4</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA AND OUR CIRCLE OF GRACE: WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL ANYWAY? This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' life as a model for our own • God calls us to be responsible for our actions • Jesus modeled how we should serve others • God teaches us to lead a healthy life and make good choices • Human life is sacred and must be respected • Responsible relationships are based on love, honesty, and respect • We are called to respect the human body as sacred life • Our conscience helps us to know what is right and to do what we believe is right • God calls us to be responsible for our own actions <p>Goals-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will come to understand the concept of Circle of Grace in relation to using social media in healthy and unhealthy ways. <p>Lesson Objectives Children will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the difference between a safe secret and an unsafe secret when using social media. • Recognize and define different types of social media and how they influence our Circle of Grace in positive and negative ways. • List positive uses of social media. • Review and describe their personal Circle of Grace. • Identify the different social media platforms and apps. • Identify behaviors that would be appropriate in relation to a child's Circle of Grace when using social media. • Identify boundary violations when using social media. • Formulate an action plan for safe use/safe exit when using social media. • Understand that trusted adults help us stay safe in our Circle of Grace and help us respect others in their Circle of Grace.
<p>Grade 5</p>	<p>COPING WITH STRESS AND PRESSURE: WHO ARE YOU LEANING ON? GOALS - This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' life as a model for our own • God calls us to be responsible for our actions • Jesus modeled how we should serve others • God teaches us to lead healthy lives and make good choices • God has made each of us in His image • Our conscience helps us to know what is right and do what we believe is right • God calls us to be responsible for our own actions <p>Lesson Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be able to identify how to cope with stress and pressure and how these can contribute to unsafe behaviors/situations. <p>Lesson Objectives Young People will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the difference between stress and pressure • Understand that stress usually comes from within. It can be healthy or unhealthy • Understand that pressure is usually applied from an external source. It can be healthy or unhealthy. • Define priorities and manage healthy boundaries • Recognize that a prayer-filled life is an antidote for stress • Identify a trusted adult they can talk to if someone is pressuring them to ignore their conscience

<p>Grade 6</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA’S INFLUENCE ON OUR RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus’ life as a model for our own • God calls us to be responsible for our actions • Jesus modeled how we should serve others • God teaches us to lead a healthy life and make good choices • Human life is sacred and must be respected • Our conscience helps us to know what is right and do what we believe is right • God calls us to be responsible for our own actions <p>Lesson Goal -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will be able to recognize the influence of social media on their relationships. <p>Lesson Objectives</p> <p>Children will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and describe their Circle of Grace. • Recognize that trusted adults help us stay safe in our Circle of Grace and help us respect others in their Circle of Grace. • Identify different types of social media and how they influence our relationships and our Circle of Grace in positive and negative ways.
<p>Grade 7</p>	<p>HUMAN TRAFFICKING – “Chosen” Video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This lesson alerts seventh graders to the tactics and dangers of this very prevalent crisis in our culture today.
<p>Grade 8</p>	<p>MORALLY RESPONSIBLE IN TODAY’S WORLD, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?</p> <p>This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in the works and presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit • Christian faith requires a relationship with God and others • We are called to model our faith in our words and actions • We are called to make moral decisions consistent with Catholic teaching • Vocations are God’s call to all • We are all Children of God because of God’s creation and covenants • Individual and cultural differences are gifts from God that should be respected • Responsible relationships are based on love, honesty, and respect • Skills such as listening, self-disclosure and compromise are necessary for faith filled communications with others <p>Lesson Goal-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will identify values that reflect moral decisions. <p>Lesson Objectives</p> <p>Young People will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that Christians have specific moral values • Identify those values and how they fit into their Circle of Grace • Understand those values and how they may oppose cultural values • Recognize that our understanding of values assists us in keeping appropriate boundaries in our Circle of Grace • Know how to seek help when something unsafe threatens their Circle of Grace

Middle School Alternative Lessons	<p>Middle school grades also have alternative lessons. Consult with your catechetical leader to determine if one of these lessons was used in place of the grade level lesson listed above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modesty • Honoring Relationships • Technology • New Age • Anything Goes Culture
Grade 9	<p>N.O.T.I.C.E. ~ WHEN BOUNDARIES ARE CHALLENGED</p> <p>This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human relationships are intended to be experiences of Divine Love • 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. <p>Lesson Objectives</p> <p>Young People will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify internal and external boundaries. • Recognize the key behaviors of an offender. • Understand that some offenders' behaviors are for the sole purpose of putting the youth • in a vulnerable position to exploit/abuse them. • Identify how best to respond and seek help in unsafe situations.
Grade 10	<p>LEVELS OF INTIMACY AND INFLUENCE</p> <p>This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • 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 <p>Lesson Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Young People will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and define the three levels of in- person relationships which determine boundaries. • Understand that "online only" connections are limited and not the same as in-person relationships. • Identify indicators of concern/boundary violations of each level of relationship • Know appropriate responses to boundary violations (concrete and abstract) • Know appropriate responses to having been previously exploited or abused by someone.

<p>Grade 11</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA: CAN YOU BE BOTH SAVVY AND SAFE?</p> <p>This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church teaching revealed in the Creed that applies to our daily lives • Human relationships are intended to be experiences of Divine Love • Personal covenant with God • 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 <p>Lesson Objective</p> <p>Young People will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and understand why internet/social media safety is important. • Recognize the keyways one can be deceived by an internet/social media interaction. • Recognize ways internet/ social media interactions or internet sites can damage one's relationship with God, self and others. • Understand the connection between internet/social media activity and your Circle of Grace. • Recognize the need for healthy boundaries, when involved in social media/ internet activity. • Recognize ways youth are pressured to participate in questionable internet/social media activity. • Know appropriate responses when one is confronted with inappropriate interactions or violations.
<p>Grade 12</p>	<p>LOVE AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY</p> <p>This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • 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 <p>Lesson Objectives</p> <p>Young People will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the beauty of God's plan for their life and to interpret the gift of their sexuality within this larger plan • View any freely chosen violation of God's plan as sinful and contrary to their dignity as human persons

High School Alternate Lessons	<p>High school grades have alternate lessons. Consult with your catechetical leader to determine if one of these lessons was used in place of the grade level lesson listed above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncomfortable Situations with Peers • Retreat • Human Trafficking • New Age and COG • Modesty • Anything Goes Culture • Action
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Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse and Neglect

Our children are our greatest treasure. As they grow and experience the world, we are continually reminded that each has been created in the image and likeness of our Almighty God. As parents, we hurt when they hurt. As Church, we hurt because some have been hurt in our midst. We want to do everything we can to assure that the hurt does not happen again.

The first step in preventing further abuse is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. Please recognize that the presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

If you suspect a child is being harmed, reporting your suspicions may protect the child and get help for the family. Please contact your county child protective services agency, city police department or county sheriff department.

***If you believe that the abuse is happening within the Catholic Church,
contact the Diocesan Coordinator of Assistance at 715 394 0206 (office hours) or 715 718 1110 at any time.***

Recognizing Child Abuse

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

The Parent:

- Shows little concern for the child.
- Denies the existence of — or blames the child for — the child's problems in school or at home.
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

The Parent and Child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other.
- Consider their relationship entirely negative.
- State that they do not like each other.

Types of Abuse

The following are some signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. It is important to note, however, these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school.
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home.
- Shrinks at the approach of adults.
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury.
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way.
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child.
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- States that there is no one at home to provide care.

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child.
- Seems apathetic or depressed.
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner.
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities.
- Reports nightmares or bed wetting.
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14.
- Runs away.
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex.
- Is secretive and isolated.
- Is jealous or controlling with family members.

Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression.
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example).
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Has attempted suicide.
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child.
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems.
- Overtly rejects the child.