

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

Preschool – 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.

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, **discern** 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>

Preschool 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* because He desires an intimate relationship with His children.
- Young children learn by repetition. Because of this, preschool through grade 2 lessons build on each other and have a lot of similarities. The goal is to start to introduce the *Circle of Grace* concepts, not to master them.
- The time frame may vary depending on size of class, age of children, 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 children in their understanding of the *Circle of Grace* Program. The depth of the children's understanding will depend upon their age and developmental stage.
- The Red Light, Green Light, Activity may be adapted to a Happy, Neutral, and Sad Face Activity if the leader believes the children have not been exposed to a stoplight.
- 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.
- There should be no more than two weeks between the last two lessons. 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 children and help them to know what to do when they feel unsafe.
- Your Administrator or Religious Education Director will be sending 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.*

*Know 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 “funny/uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe and take the right action.

Circle of Grace Vocabulary

Words introduced in Kindergarten

Bullying: Repeatedly being mean to someone on purpose

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 (app) 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. In the near future, it may go to 280 characters.

Photo Sharing App: Captures, edits & shares photos, videos & messages with friends & family.

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.

Mobile Video App: Allows you to send videos and pictures, both of which will disappear after about 10 seconds of a person viewing them. You can view them after the 10 seconds if you did a screen shot.

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 or other means 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 and/or photo between cell phones or other handheld devices.

Webcam: A front facing video camera that attaches to a computer or is built into 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, words that are spoken or written, that make one feel uncomfortable or scared. This type of media is disrespectful to people and would be something your parent/trusted adult would not approve.

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 good for you in mind, body, and spirit.

Relationship: An authentic 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 behaviors (physical, verbal or social) by a person or group with the intent to inflict harm on or make fun of 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 Middle School Alternate Lessons

Stress: A state of mental/emotional strain resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances

Pressure: Typically applied from an external source (peers, teachers, family, etc.) in a demand for high performance or healthy/unhealthy behavior,

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.

Words Introduced in the High School Alternate Lessons

Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery

Human Trafficking: Slavery in the form of *forced labor* or *sex trafficking* in which the victim is under 18 years of age, or is compelled by force, fraud or coercion, respectively, to provide labor or services, or to engage in a commercial sex act. There is no requirement that the victim be transported or travel across a *national* border.

Coercion: Threatening physical or non-physical harm (psychological or financial) against someone in order to manipulate them into doing something they do not want to do or would not normally do.

Modesty: A thing of the Past or Not?

Humility: Understanding of the truth of God and who we truly are; made in His image.

What is Your Motto?

Motto/Theme: A maxim adopted as a guide to one's conduct. This motto can be derived from our Catholic or popular culture

Tech Savvy or Tech Safe?

Sexting: Sexually explicit images or texts sent by way of the phone. There may be legal consequences if one or both persons involved are minors.

Pornography: 1: The depiction of erotic behavior (pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement. 2: material (as books or a photograph) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement 3: the depiction of acts in a sensational manner so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction, *Merriam Webster*

What is a Circle of Grace?

Sometimes children 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 child, "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 child 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:

- 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

Lesson Goal

Children will come to understand and/or describe the concept of a *Circle of Grace*.

Lesson Objectives

Children will be able to:

1. Begin to demonstrate his/her own *Circle of Grace*.
2. Begin to describe what makes a person's *Circle of Grace* a holy space.
3. Begin to identify the behaviors appropriate for the *Circle of Grace*.

Vocabulary (This is the K through 2 vocabulary list adapted for the preschool class.)

1. **Children of God:** All people are made and loved by God.
2. **Circle of Grace:** The love and goodness of God that always surrounds me and all others. (Circle – something that goes around)
3. **Grace:** The gift of God's goodness and love to help me live as his child.
4. **Holy:** Special because of a connection with God. (We are holy, connected to God by his love for us.)
5. **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. (The Holy Spirit is not scary.)
6. **Respect:** Being kind to others and doing what's best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God. (Someone who is there for you when you are sad or hurt.)
7. **Trust:** Being able to count on someone to help me to stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.

Materials Needed

1. *Circle of Grace* Logo (see the end of Preschool Lessons)
2. (Optional) *Circle of Grace* Song (in the Administrator/Director section)
3. Whiteboard or chalkboard
4. Chart paper or flip chart paper to make a “happy/sad face chart”
5. *Circle of Grace* Logo coloring page/black and white version (see the end of Preschool Lessons)
6. (Optional) Happy Face coloring page (see the end of Preschool Lessons)
7. Markers or crayons (optional)
8. Happy Face Stickers

Opening Prayer

Leader calls class to prayer by asking children to quiet down. The leader does the Sign of the Cross modeling it for the children. Then say together,

Holy Spirit, show us the way.
Be with us in all we think, do, and say. Amen.

Optional Prayer- The *Circle of Grace* Song

Lesson Development

Getting Started

1. Today we are going to learn about God’s love for us. (*Show children the Circle of Grace Symbol.*)
2. This is a symbol for our *Circle of Grace*. It reminds us that God loves us and His love is always around us. Everyone has a *Circle of Grace*.

Activity - Circle of Grace

1. Where is our *Circle of Grace* and where are other people’s Circles of Grace?
2. Ask children to stand with enough room around them to fully extend their arms without touching each other.
3. Give the following directions while modeling the desired actions:
4. Give the following directions while modeling the desired actions:
 - a. Raise your hands above your head
 - b. Bring your arms slowly down
 - c. Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you
 - d. Embrace all the space around you
 - e. Then reach down to your feet
 - f. Know that God is in this space with you
 - g. Tell the children, “This is the *Circle of Grace* in which you live.”
5. Repeat steps a, b, and c to reinforce physical dimensions of *Circle of Grace*.

Discussion

1. Now, we will talk about why it is important that we know about our *Circle of Grace*.
2. Jesus told us that he would always love us and always be with us. How do we know someone loves us? (Some examples: they help us, they make us cookies, and they give us hugs.) We are always in a special, holy place because God loves us. That place is our *Circle of Grace*. This is the place the Holy Spirit is with us and within us. (Review that the Holy Spirit is not scary.)
3. If we can remember that we are in a *Circle of Grace*, with God and surrounded by God's love, we will remember to behave by caring and respecting ourselves and others.

Optional Activities - Color page

1. *Color the Circle of Grace coloring page - black and white version. Leader may choose to use color pages from each Optional Activity to form a Circle of Grace Color Book for the children.*
2. *Have children draw their own Circle of Grace.*

Activity - Happy and Sad Face Chart

1. *Make a chart with two columns on the poster paper/flip chart paper. Label one with a happy face and one with a sad face.*
2. *What are some nice things that people do or say? What are some hurtful things that people do or say? (Things that hurt your feelings or make you feel **bad angry or sad.**)*
3. *Allow a few responses. List on the board in the appropriate column.*
4. *Point out that words and behaviors listed in the happy face column are those that belong in our Circle of Grace. The words and behaviors in the sad face column are those that do not belong in anyone's Circle of Grace.*
5. *Keep happy and sad face chart posted for future reference.*

Review

1. *Review the Circle of Grace Movement. Ask children to stand with enough room around them to fully extend their arms without touching each other.*
2. *Give the following directions while modeling the desired actions:*
3. **Raise your hands above your head**
4. **Bring your arms slowly down**
5. **Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you**
6. **Embrace all the space around you**
7. **Then reach down to your feet**
8. **Know that God is in this space with you**
9. *This is the Circle of Grace that you live in.*
10. *Pass out the Happy Face stickers.*

Closing Prayer

Leader calls class to prayer by asking children to quiet down. The leader does the Sign of the Cross modeling it for the children. Then say together,

**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.**

Lesson 2: The Stoplight and a Safety Plan

Sometimes children 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 child, "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 child 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:

- 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

Lesson Goal

Children will be better able to identify safe and unsafe situations.

Children will start to demonstrate how to take action if their Circle of Grace boundaries are threatened or crossed.

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. Begin to learn how to identify when someone comes into their *Circle of Grace*.
3. Begin 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 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.

Materials Needed

1. Large picture of a stoplight with all three colors visible - red, yellow, and green (see the end of the Kindergarten Lessons)
2. One set of red, yellow, and green circle cards for the leader, the backside of each colored card should be white and the front side red, yellow, or green. You could put the circle cards on a popsicle stick so they look more like the signal in a stoplight.
3. Feeling Faces Chart (see the end of the Kindergarten Lessons)
4. The "Good Secret / Bad Secret" handout
5. Whiteboard or chalkboard
6. Markers or crayons
7. Construction or color paper for each child
8. Create one large Skill Poster of "How to Ask for Help" with following steps (see the end of the Kindergarten Lessons for a sample):
 - a. Look at the person.
 - b. Say, "I need to tell you something important."
 - c. Clearly describe the problem.
 - d. Thank the person for helping you.
9. The Stoplight and Safety Plan Letter for Parents (see the end of Kindergarten Lessons)
 - Attach a copy of the Good Secret/Bad Secret and How to Ask for Help handouts to the parent letter

Opening Prayer

Leader calls class to prayer by asking children to quiet down and join in the Sign of the Cross. Then say together

**Holy Spirit, show us the way.
Be with us in all we think, do, and say. Amen.**

Getting Started

It is important to begin the lesson by explaining that God does not want or cause bad things to happen. There will be children in every group who may have already experienced unsafe or hurtful situations. It is important to reinforce it is not their fault. We want our children to understand that God is with them and for them even when they are hurting or sad.

Review

1. Demonstrate the Circle of Grace as learned in previous lesson.
2. Point to Happy Face and Sad Face chart from Lesson 1. Ask children the following:
 - a. What did we write on this chart? (Answer: words and actions we like and don't like from others.)
 - b. What were some of the words and actions you liked? Why?
 - c. What were some you did not like? Why?

Today we are going to continue talking about words and actions that we like and don't like in our Circle of Grace. We will also learn a new way to identify what doesn't belong in our Circle of Grace.

Discussion

1. Show a large picture of a stoplight.
2. Discuss the meaning or purpose of a stoplight by asking:
 - a. Why do we have stoplights? Pause for answers.
The reason we have stoplights is to protect people and keep them safe.
 - b. What does each color of the stoplight mean?
(STOP, BE CAREFUL, and GO AHEAD.)

Lesson Development

Introduction

Review the definition of "signal" with children, see vocabulary. Reinforce that the activity is using the word "signal" (instead of "light") is intentionally in order to point to the fact that a "signal" can be both internal and external.

Towns and cities have stoplights which are signals to keep people safe and protected. God has given each of us our own kind of signal to keep us safe and protected. Sometimes these signals

come from other people like our parents or teachers. Sometimes these signals are called feelings and are one of the main ways the Holy Spirit helps to guide us. 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.

Discussion

1. Let's think of the signals God gives us to help keep us safe and protected like the three colors of a stoplight: green, red, and yellow.
2. **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? (*Leader points out that everything written on the happy face poster, from first lesson, would be a green signal word or action.*)
3. **Red Signal** - Means STOP. Some things are unsafe and always mean trouble. *Be sure to spend some time reviewing general concepts of bullying. Ask the children to define it and what it looks like etc.* Some examples are bullying (being mean to someone on purpose), lying, hitting, fighting, etc. Can you help me think of other things that are never good to do or let someone do to you? (*Leader points out that everything written on the sad face poster, from first lesson, would be a red signal word or action.*) When this happens, tell someone that you trust, like your mom, dad, leader, or other trusted adult.
4. **Yellow Signal** - Means BE CAREFUL. Sometimes you can't tell if a **something** 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.
5. Define trusted adult and remind them there will be a discussion later in the lesson.

Activity - Red Signal, Green Signal

The purpose of this activity is to help children learn how to identify dangerous and unsafe situations, feelings, and touch, but not to scare or shame them. Make sure to give clear and concise reasons why a situation falls into the green or yellow/red signal category. For children, it may sometimes be hard to distinguish between red and yellow situations. Take the example of a stranger coming up to them asking for help. The children may be thinking it is "good" to help someone but "bad" to talk to strangers. They cannot discern which one takes priority. The children need to be aware of their internal process of conflicting feelings, which they might be experiencing. Children will learn that when possible they should always talk to a trusted adult before acting in a Red or Yellow Situation. Remind children that there are always adults available to listen and talk. Children only need to ask a trusted adult for the time to talk.

1. *The Leader needs a set of red, green, and yellow circle /stoplight cards.*
2. *Suggested instructions:*
 - In a moment, I'm going to describe some **stories**.
 - Please listen very carefully.
 - At the end of each, I'm going to ask you if you think the **story** describes a red signal, a yellow signal, or a green signal. I will hold up a signal and you tell me if I am right or wrong.
 - Then we'll talk about each **story**.
3. *Read each situation aloud. **Make sure to vary the order in which the green, red, and yellow situations are read.***

*After reading the **story**, give the children a moment before asking them if the circle card you are holding up is right or wrong. Some **stories**, though clearly red to adults, may be unclear (yellow) from a child's perspective. This activity will help children identify their own confusing feelings about these **stories** and to understand that they should talk to a trusted adult. Allow time for children to discuss their feelings connected with these **stories**. (Refer to Feeling Faces chart as needed at the end of lesson plan.)*

a. **GREEN STORIES (Select two or more)**

- Your mom or dad gives you a hug when you are sad (*loved, comforted*).
- 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*).
- Your grandmother/grandfather wipes your tears when you fall down and hurt yourself (*loved, comforted, safe*).
- You tell the leader when you accidentally break something in your classroom (*embarrassed, sorry, guilty, happy that you told*).
- You let your teacher know that you saw some classmates being really mean to your friend. You told them to stop being mean and they laughed (*mad, happy that you told*).

b. **YELLOW/RED STORIES (Select three or more and reinforce that they are always to talk to a trusted adult.)**

- ~~You are walking home from school and someone you don't know well offers to give you a ride home. The person said she received a "text" from your mom to pick you up (*cautious, scared*).~~
- Your big brother's friend wants you to see something on his cell phone using the internet. Your family rule is that you can only use the internet with your mom or dad (*worried, afraid of getting into trouble*).
- **Someone gives you a special gift and tells you not to tell your mom or dad.**

- You are playing at the neighborhood park with your older sister. A man/woman says “Hi,” to you and asks if you can help find his/her lost puppy (*sad, anxious*).
- Your friend’s big brother/sister wants you to do something you don’t want to do (*pressured, confused*).
- An adult or older kid asks you to go with him to the park. He says that your parents won’t care and won’t understand about our special time together. (*confused, curious*)
- A neighborhood friend has started to be mean to you. You don’t know why your friend is acting this way (*sad, anxious, worried*).
- Your friend wants you to ride your bike down the street even though your mom/ dad told you that you must stay in the driveway (*confused, pressured*).

This Next Section is on Secrets.

Most offenders use secrecy as a tactic to control the child from telling about the abuse. It is important that the students understand the difference between a good secret and a bad secret. This understanding could be the key in them seeking help.

Continue by saying: “Sometimes secrets can even give us a funny feeling in our heart or tummy. A safe secret is one that does not hurt others or me. A secret is unsafe when I think that someone, including me, might be hurt or get in trouble if I do not tell. A good way to decide if a secret is safe or unsafe is to ask ourselves, ‘Can this secret hurt me or someone else?’”

Activity

Red Signal Green Signal - Secrets

- 1) Make a **safe** secret and **unsafe** secret chart with two columns. This can be done on poster paper/flip chart paper (**safe** secret 😊 and **unsafe** secret 😞).
- 2) Can you name some **safe** secrets? Who is involved in the secret? Is there a time that it is finally told?
- 3) Can you name an **unsafe** secret? Who is involved in the secret? Can the secret hurt you or someone else? Are you told NEVER to tell the secret to your parent/trusted adult?

Reinforce that it is important always to tell their parent or trusted adult the secret even if someone tells them not to.

Safety Plan

Introduction

1. We have already mentioned the need to talk to a “trusted adult” when you are feeling unsafe, uncomfortable or unsure.
2. Let’s discuss what we mean by a “Trusted Adult”. Write term on board.
3. *Allow a few responses.*
4. *Shape their responses: “A Trusted Adult is a grown-up who helps you to stay safe in your Circle of Grace and to respect others within their Circle of Grace. Examples of Trusted Adults, other than your parents, could be a teacher, a neighbor, an aunt or uncle, your grandparent, a church leader, or a family friend.”*
5. How do you know you can trust someone?
6. *Allow a few responses*
7. You know someone is trustworthy when they help you to be safe, when they tell the truth, and when they are there for you in good times and bad.
8. Can anyone 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.
List children’s responses on the board.*
9. These are people whom you can ask to help you if you are unsafe or confused. We call these people Trusted Adults.

Activity - Identifying My Trusted Adults

1. *Give each child a piece of paper and crayons or markers.*
2. *Instruct the children to think of one or two Trusted Adults besides mom or dad whom they could ask for help.*
3. *Tell a person next to you the names of the Trusted Adults that you picked.*
4. *Have the children draw a picture of each of their Trusted Adults. Remind children that mom and dad may be trusted adults even if they are not in the picture.*
5. *Attach the drawing to the Home Activity Sheet for Parents (see the end of the Kindergarten Lessons).*
6. *Instruct the children to have their parents sign the Home Activity Sheet.*
7. *Remind the children to bring the Home Activity Sheet back to the classroom for the next class. This is to ensure the parents know who their child picked as a trusted adult. Sometimes children may pick someone who is not available or inappropriate.*

Skill Introduction

1. *Ask the children to think of times when they might need to talk to or ask a trusted adult for help. List these on the board.*
2. *Post the adapted skill poster “How to Ask for Help”.*
 - a. *Picture of eyes*
 - b. *Picture of a child speaking/mouth*
 - c. *Picture of “?”*
 - d. *The words “Thank You”*
3. *Adapted skill steps are:*
 - a. *Look at the person (Picture of eyes)*
 - b. *Tell the person, “I need help. I do not feel safe.” (Picture of a child speaking/mouth – see the end of the lessons.)*
 - c. *Tell the person what is wrong, why you don’t feel safe. (Picture of the question mark “?” see the end of the lessons)*
 - d. *Tell the person “Thank You”. (Picture of the words “Thank You” at the end of the lessons.)*
4. *This is how we ask for help. You can use these steps whenever you need to ask anyone for help. Today we are going to practice how to ask for help from your parents or a trusted adult.*

Practice makes Perfect

According to research we remember 5% of what we hear and 90% of what we do. Allowing children to role-play greatly increases their chances of remembering what to do when a real problem arises. It is very common for children to use play to help them understand confusing situations

1. *Have the children as a group practice the following:*
 - a. Children look at the leader.
 - b. Children say aloud, "I need your help. I don't feel safe."
 - c. Children say aloud, "Please help me ".
 - d. Children say aloud, "Thank You."
2. *Remember to attach "How to Ask for Help" Handouts to the Parent Home Activity Sheet.*

Wrapping Up

1. *Encourage children to pray for and/or write a note of thanks to each of their trusted adults.*
2. *Review the definitions of feelings with the children.*
 1. *They are not right or wrong, good or bad.*
 2. *They may be God's signals about what is going on in our lives*
3. *Review the Circle of Grace movement. Ask children to stand with enough room around them to fully extend their arms without touching each other.*

Closing Prayer

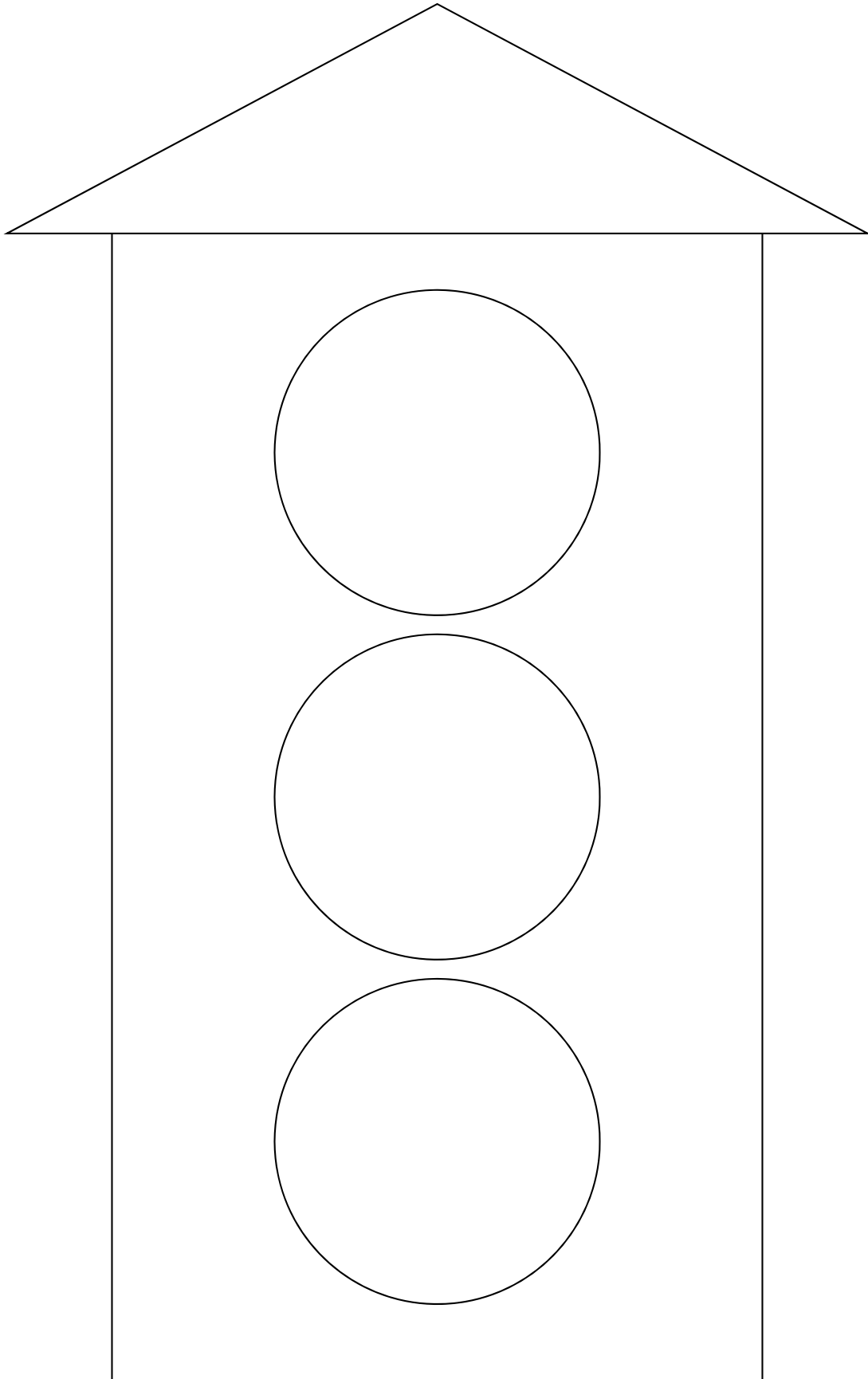
**Thank you, God,
for always being with me in my *Circle of Grace*.
Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit
who helps me know what is good.
Thank you for giving me people who care about me
and want me to be safe.
Amen.**

Optional: Color the How to Ask for Help or Stoplight page. Leader may choose to use color pages from each handout to form a Circle of Grace Color Book for children.









Feeling Faces Chart



Embarrassed



Frustrated



Happy



Lonely



Loved



Mad



Sad



Nervous



Proud



Relaxed

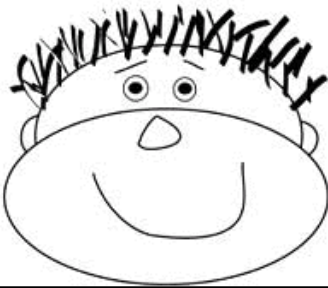


Scared



Stressed

Feeling Faces Chart/No Labels















This material was developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (Cooperative Agreement N. PHS-90YD0119). The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, nor does mention of trade names, commercial projects, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. You may reproduce this material for training and information purposes.

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Lesson 1 and 2

The Circle of Grace, the Stoplight and Safety Plan Home Activity Sheet for Parents

Your child's first lesson reviewed the Circle of Grace concept outlined in the previous letter you received about the Circle of Grace curriculum.

The second lesson: The Stoplight and Safety Plan is to help children identify safe and unsafe situations/secrets and know how to talk to a trusted adult. The children are taught that God does not want or cause bad things to happen to them, to understand that God is with them and for them even when they are hurting or sad. They are able to identify when someone comes into their *Circle of Grace*, and to recognize safe and unsafe touch/situations and how to talk to a trusted adult if they feel unsafe or are confused.

In this lesson, we use the analogy of a stoplight to connect a green signal with safe situations, a red signal with unsafe situations, and a yellow signal with situations in which a child might feel confused or unsure. We also talk about secrets. Most offenders use secrecy as a tactic to control the child from telling about the abuse. It is important that the students understand the difference between a good secret and a bad secret. This understanding could be key to them seeking help. Sometimes it is hard for a child to distinguish between the yellow and red situations. When that happens, children need to talk to someone they trust like their parents, leader, or other trusted adult. Learning to be more aware of these signals helps children recognize them as one of the main ways the Holy Spirit helps to guide us.

It is important for you as parents and guardians to reinforce this lesson at home with your child. You are encouraged to talk with your child about real situations in his or her everyday life and invite your child to identify whether the situations are green (GO AHEAD, this is safe), red (STOP, this is unsafe always talk to a trusted adult before acting), or yellow (BE CAREFUL, always talk to a trusted adult before acting). There is a take home "secrets" and "how to ask for help" handout for you to review with your child.

The last part of the lesson is the safety plan. It includes asking children to name and draw a picture of trusted adults (in addition to their parents). Please ask your child to show you this drawing and tell you who is the trusted adult in the picture. If your child names someone you find inappropriate, please help him/her to identify someone else.

Please contact these individuals to let them know you and your child have identified them as trusted adults. This can be done in person, by phone, or a letter. (Letter-writing is a fun activity you can do with your child.) Being identified as a trusted adult will most likely make them feel honored as well as alert them to your safety plan for your child.

Please have your child return the drawing with your signature as a confirmation for us that you received this information and discussed it with your child. Please call the parish, school, or religious education office if you have questions.

Thank you for your cooperation!

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"

Preschool Evaluation

Date _____

Parish/School _____ *City* _____

Leader _____ *Number of children in class* _____

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

Please list what worked well any resources that you would like to share (use back if necessary).

Please list any suggestions that would improve lessons (use back if necessary).

Return to your School Administrator or Director of Religious Education.