

# *Family, Faith and Circle of Grace*

## *High School*

### *A.C.T.I.O.N.*

## *Steps Needed When Concerns Don't Go Away*

*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 teaching revealed in the Creed 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

### **Lesson Objective**

#### **Young People will be able to:**

1. Identify and understand key steps to be safe in uncomfortable situations
2. Understand the connection between acting safely and our *Circle of Grace*
3. Recognize that acting safe, protects the true person.
4. Recognize ways they are pressured to ignore taking actions in unsafe situations.
5. Identify appropriate responses when they are confronted with inappropriate interactions or violations.

### **Materials Needed**

1. Whiteboard or chalkboard
2. Art supplies for the skits
3. Props for the skits
4. Summary of Key Concept of Circle of Grace Handout (at the end of the lesson)
5. A.C.T.I.O.N. Activity Sheet (at the back of the lesson).

*It is important to begin the lesson by explaining that God does not want or cause bad things to happen. There will be young people who have already experienced unsafe or hurtful situations. It is important to reinforce that it is not their fault, and it is never too late to tell a trusted adult. We want our young people to understand that God is with them and for them even when they are hurting or sad.*

## **Getting Started**

*Review the Summary of the Key Concepts of Circle of Grace handout to explain how God is present within us, and wants the best for us in all things, therefore he created us with the Circle of Grace to help keep us safe.*

### **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.

## **Discussion**

Today 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. *Write the acronym A.C.T.I.O.N. on the board.*

**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.

**A**ttention: 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? *List them on the board.*

**C**onscience: 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? *List them on the board.*

**T**rust your instincts: The Holy Spirit PROMPTS us to be safe.

If you think or feel 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, has dropped out of most activities and says she doesn't care about life anymore. 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? *List them on the board.*

**I**nformation: 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? *List them on the board.*

**O**ptions: 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? *List them on the board.*

**N**o 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? *List on the board*

### **Activity: What Would You Do?**

*Divide the youth into several groups.*

*Give each group at least two of the examples (the examples above and those identified by youth)*

*Have them develop a skit using the examples. Remind them to act out the skits respectfully.*

*Each skit should have a couple of endings. One ending should be the safe way out and the other would be a poor choice and not a safe ending.*

*The group should identify a narrator for the skit.*

*The narrator will ask "What would you do? before they act out the first ending.*

*The Audience will decide which skit is the:*

- *Safest ending*
- *Not so safe ending*

### **Large Group Discussion:**

Let's discuss the skits and the different endings.

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?

*Allow for a few responses. Write them on the board.*

## **Review**

*It is important for young people to 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 be diminished 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.

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. Do you have other ideas on how to be safe? Give youth a chance to respond to the question. Write each bullet and the youths' responses on the board. Ask the youth to write down the bullet points on a piece of paper.**

*Give each student the A.C.T.I.O.N. activity sheet and have them write an example talked about in class. Assign students to take it home and discuss with their parents. Paper needs to be signed by a parent and returned the next session.*

- 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.
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# Summary of the Key Concepts of “Circle of Grace”



## **God gives each of us a Circle of Grace 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 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 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
- God wants us to talk to trusted adults about our worries, concerns or “funny/ uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe.

# A.C.T.I.O.N. Activity Sheet

## **A**ttention: **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:**

## **C**onscience: **WHAT** is it telling you?

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

**Example:**

## **T**rust 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:**

## **I**nformation: 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:**

## **O**ptions: 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:**

## **N**o 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:**

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Family Faith and Circle of Grace***  
***A.C.T.I.O.N.-Steps needed when Concerns Don't Go Away***  
***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*.
3. YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_ Young People will be able to describe Circle of Virtue.
4. YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_ Young People can identify keys steps to take to stay safe in an uncomfortable situation.
5. YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_ Young People understand that acting safely protects the true person.
6. YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_ Young People will identify ways in which they are pressured to ignore being safe in uncomfortable situations.
7. YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_ Young People will identify what action to take when being pressured or experiencing other boundary violations.

*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.**