



## CIRCLE OF GRACE

Circle of Grace is a safe environment program developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha in response to Article 12 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. It serves the dual purpose of educating and forming youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others.

Through the Circle of Grace program, adults assist children and youth to recognize that each of us lives within a Circle of Grace that holds our very essence in body, mind, heart, soul, and sexuality. Through the Circle of Grace program, children and youth are taught to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated.

Circle of Grace is clinically sound and grounded in the Catholic tradition. Its strong parent component means parents can actively participate in their children's education and formation.

After several years of successful implementation, testing and evaluation, the Archdiocese of Omaha is making Circle of Grace available to those responsible for creating safe environments for children. Already eleven (arch)dioceses have successfully implemented this comprehensive prevention program. Click on the Testimonies link to read what they have to say about the user-friendly program, its invaluable "train the trainer" component and the favorable response shared by youth who have participated in Circle of Grace. Spanish and Vietnamese versions are yours free when you purchase the Circle of Grace program.

### CONCEPT

Through the Circle of Grace program, children and youth are taught to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated. Along with a strong parent component, the program teaches children that God is with them at all times, especially in difficult situations.

Below is a summary of key Circle of Grace concepts:

#### **God gives each of us a Circle of Grace (see below) where He is always "Present"**

Raise your hands above your head, and 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, knowing that God is in this space with you. Slowly reach down to your feet. 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.
- He desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- Our faith's greatest promise is not that faith gives us a perfect life, but knowing God is always "present," especially during the difficult times.

### **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 grownups about our worries, concerns or “funny/uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe.

## **CIRCLE OF GRACE PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **PROGRAM GOAL**

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.

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

Children/young people will understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- *God is "present" in everyone's Circle of Grace.*

Children/young people will be able to describe the Circle of Grace which God gives each of us.

- *God is "present" because He desires a relationship with us.*

Children/young people will be able to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual boundaries.

- *God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace.*

Children/young people will be able to identify all types of boundary violations.

- *God helps us know what does not belong in our Circle of Grace.*

Children/young people will demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.

- *God helps us know when to ask for help from someone who we trust.*