

## *Circle of Grace Adaptations for Children with Special Needs*

A number of dioceses have adopted the *Circle of Grace* curriculum to assist them in being compliant with Article 12 of the USCCB Charter. Among the many children in our schools are those who need adaptation of the original curriculum to accomplish the goals of each lesson. The following general suggestions are a result of consultation with professional educators working with children with special needs.

1. The best resource for adaptation ideas is the child's family. Be sure to consult with them when determining the needs of the child.
2. Know your students and utilize their strengths
3. Materials that are available for each activity may be adapted to meet the needs of children with a range of developmental levels.
4. All children learn through repetition. Allow time for repetition, practice and role play.
5. Focus on key phrases or words in the curriculum.
6. Use music and sing songs that may assist with the objectives in a lesson. Use pictures, videos and objects to demonstrate ideas (see activities materials at the end of each lesson)
7. Keep the goal of each lesson in mind and adapt as needed:

The below are general suggestions and lesson adaptations created by **Erin Jeffries**, Catechesis Consultant for teachers working with special needs children in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. We are grateful to her for sharing her expertise with others who use the *Circle of Grace* curriculum!

### *General Suggestions*

**Vocabulary:** There are a lot of new words- expect to spend extra time going over them, and using different ways to go over them- here are a few ideas:

- Use pictures/images as often as possible to illustrate a word or its meaning
- Rainbow words: trace over a word many times with different colored pens
- Tactile/sensory words: flash cards with vocabulary words with rice, un-popped popcorn or Jell-O-powder, or some similar material glued over the letters
- Games: a crossword, a word find, matching the word to what it means or to a picture.

### **Prayers:**

- Put the words to the prayer to the tune of a familiar song (like the "Gilligan's Island" theme or "Row, Row Row your boat")
- Provide a large copy for the class to see and pray together (like on poster board)

**Songs/Music:** Music can be very helpful in relaxing, focusing, and learning concepts, but notice if someone seems to be bothered by the music (covering ears, rocking etc.)

**Those who are less or non-verbal:** You may need to provide more examples or pictures. Drawing is a great communication tool, as is acting. Gestures and Sign language can be a powerful tool as well. Another tool is to use word banks that they can manipulate to indicate an answer, or a gesture (thumbs up or down) if appropriate.

**Those who have difficulty with writing:** Allowing verbal answers that are then transcribed, drawing instead of writing, word banks, slips of paper with words printed on them, letter tiles from games like *Bananagrams* or *Scrabble* to build words can be useful tools.

**Pictures really are worth a thousand words:** Any time you can utilize a picture, artwork, statue etc. to talk about a concept or tell a story, the more likely you are to engage visual learners, and evoke responses.

*Don't be afraid to break up a lesson into smaller chunks for those who need more processing time, or have difficulty sitting and attending for longer periods of time, it is better to take a little longer with it and ensure that they are understanding this important information!*

## ***Grade Specific***

### **Kindergarten**

Goals –

- 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.

#### **- Lesson 1.**

- Activity: Happy and Sad Face Chart
  - Keep in mind those who are less or non-verbal, allow them to act out the nice or hurtful things people do.

#### **- Lesson 2.**

- Discussion:
  - Prior to Discussion: play “Red light, Green light” to help reinforce the colors in the stoplight and what they mean.
- Red Signal, Green Signal Activity:

- Plan to help name and describe the feelings, and have them show what those feelings look like on their faces (mirror) and on their friend's faces.
  - You may need to take a brief water or stretch break before going into the second 'secret' portion of the activity.
- Introduction:
  - "Trust" and "trusted adult" are concepts that may require more time and guidance, in the form of examples to develop.
- Activity:
  - Consider those who are less or non-verbal, as they draw their pictures, you can help identify who is in them by asking questions, determining a signal for response (such as a thumbs up or down, signing yes or no etc.)
- Skill Introduction:
  - Introduce and practice one piece of the process at a time, using the poster provided.
  - Again, consider those who are less or non-verbal, reminding them of ways they have to communicate, i.e. drawing, making a noise to get attention, communication board if available, sign language etc... and have them practice using that method.

## **Grade 1**

### Goals –

- 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.
- **Lesson 1.**
- Happy/Sad Face Chart Activity: role play positive words and actions and negative words and actions- have them clearly show the feeling face they would have if that word or action happened to them.
    - OR have them draw what is happening, and put that on the chart so they have visuals for the actions
    - OR if a child is less verbal, have pictures ready of positive and negative actions, and have them show a smile or a sad face in response.

- Using puppets to role-play can make it easier for some
- **Lesson 2.**
  - Review:
    - Have them show a word or action they liked or did not like
  - Prior to Discussion portion:
    - Play the game Red Light, Green Light as a reminder of what the lights tell us
  - Red Signal, Green Signal Activity:
    - You may act out or provide pictures of the red, yellow and green situations you give them.
    - Help them express- and give names to the feelings they feel when those situations arise.
      - Utilize the feeling face sheets
      - Have them make faces at each other!
  - You may want to take a brief break, either to get a drink or stretch, etc. between the situations and the secret portion (it could get long for some)
  - The concept of “trust” and who is a “trusted adult” is one that may need more time, as well as some examples and suggestions.
  - Some will probably need help labeling the pictures of their trusted adults
  - Introduce and practice steps to asking for help one at a time- then give/send home the adapted skill poster.

## **Grade 2**

### Goals –

- 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.
- **Lesson 1.**
  - Discussion:
    - You may need to incorporate alternate means of answering questions, such as signing yes or no, or thumbs up and thumbs down.
- **Lesson 2.**
  - Introduction:
    - Play Red Light, Green Light as a reminder of what the colors mean

- Red Signal Green Signal Activity:
  - Use pictures, to illustrate the situation you are describing
  - If possible, let the class identify what color the situation or secret would be (i.e., give them red, green and yellow objects to hold up)
  - Use feeling chart to talk about feelings
- This may be a long time to sit for some, so you might want to take a brief break before the Discussion session.
- Activity:
  - Consider those who are less or non-verbal, ways for them to express who their trusted adults are- this may be by drawing, he or she may need some suggestions, and provide a thumbs up or no to give an answer.
  - Be ready to help label drawings for those who have difficulty writing
- **Role Playing:** you may need to help the class “notice” what was done well, and what they might want to do differently next time.

### **Grade 3**

#### Goals –

- The concept of COG will be reinforced
- Children will be better able to identify safe and unsafe situations
- Children will better understand how to take action if boundaries are threatened or violate.

#### **Pre and Post Assessments:**

*Consider alternate means of evaluating, such as allowing verbal response, doing the evaluation in chunks rather than all together, words that are cut out so the student can match them to the definition, thumbs up or thumbs down for True/False questions etc.*

##### - **Lesson 1.**

- Consider taking the class over to the Church, so they can have the visual of the tabernacle and the beautiful space.
  - Also the familiar environment will help them remember the actions of reverence we use in Church.

##### - **Lesson 2.**

- Boundaries:
  - It may be very useful to have pictures of the physical and symbolic boundaries available as you talk about them.
  - Internal boundaries are a little more abstract, so it may be useful to model these, at least briefly.

- Boundary Scenarios:
  - Depending on the individual abilities in the class, it may be more appropriate to act out scenarios as a whole group
  - Be prepared to prompt in discussion questions if needed.
- Action Plan:
  - Visuals, such as a poster will be very helpful, along with the words. One idea could be to photos of the students doing the three steps.
    - Consider alternatives for children who are less or non-verbal, such as making a noise to draw attention, or a signal, some are taught to vocalize. Ask if needed.
    - Remind them of other ways they can tell their trusted adult- such as drawing, or their communication board, or their best means.
    - You will most likely need to model the tone of voice you expect them to use in these situations.

## **Grade 4**

Goal-

- Children will come to understand the concept of a COG in relationship to use of the internet on computers, phones, etc.
- Vocabulary: There is a LOT of new vocabulary this year. Where appropriate, it might be very useful to show examples on the computer as you talk about some of these things.
- Don't be afraid to break up this lesson, it is a lot of new information, and there are some very easy places to do so.
- Be prepared to guide discussion regarding destructive and constructive uses of the internet, by way of scenarios and suggestions.
  - Rules for Internet Safety:
    - As you discuss these, it could be useful to come up with a symbol for each one, to help with correlation and memory.
    - A thumbs up, thumbs down column approach could work well- and develop a "10 Commandments" type poster.
  - Vocabulary Matching Game:

- Cut out the word bank so they can glue the word next to the definition or have the words and definitions (and symbols if you used them!) on notecards and allow them to physically match them.
- Action Plan:
  - Remember, some children are MUCH more adept at computer use than with communication skills, consider ways they can follow the action plan, such as writing, drawing, or showing- whatever is their best method.

## **Grade 5**

### Goal-

- Children will be able to recognize the influence of the media on their COG.
- Review: possibly utilize charts/ symbols used in 4<sup>th</sup> grade to help with memory
  - Ways to Communicate:
    - If needed, include pictures of different types of media as you discuss
  - Four Uses of Media:
    - A symbol or model photo for each of the four uses of media could be very helpful in organizing information.
  - Positive and Negative Influences of Media:
    - Depending on your group, this may be a good way to utilize volunteers (to facilitate discussion) or to have it as a whole group.
    - Be prepared to lead this discussion, and give examples.
  - 10 Commandments Activity: you could utilize PowerPoint slides to illustrate the stories/examples as you tell them

## **Grade 6**

### Goals-

- Young people will come to a deeper understanding of their COG.
- Young people will be better able to identify, form and maintain healthy relationships
- Young people will be able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Young people will be better able to safeguard their COG from violations

## **Pre and Post Assessments:**

*Consider alternate means of evaluating, such as allowing verbal response, doing the evaluation in chunks rather than all together, words that are cut out so the student can match them to the definition, thumbs up or thumbs down for True/False questions etc.*

### **- Lesson 1:**

#### ○ Lesson Presentation:

- Use an actual puzzle to illustrate the ideas you are talking about

#### ○ Activity:

- Be mindful of motor skills in your group, whether some will need pre-cut puzzle pieces.

### **- Lesson 2:**

#### ○ Getting started discussion:

- Be prepared to give examples of how we show respect.

#### ○ Who we have relationships with:

- If needed, some photos representing those we have relationships may be useful

#### ○ “Actions and Words” discussion

- Depending on the group, it may be useful to role play examples they give and have them show their response to the words and or actions.

### **- Lesson 3:**

#### ○ Quiet/instrumental music can be helpful in maintaining quiet prayer time

#### ○ Safe/Unsafe Scenarios:

- Be mindful of motor skills in your group, noting anyone who may need help turning their tent, or allow them to answer in an alternative manner.
- Allow plenty of time to consider the scenario before discussing the situation.

### **- Lesson 4:**

#### ○ Introduction to “PLAAN”

- A symbol to go along with each letter can help differentiate and aid memory of the meaning- or a physical action to correlate.
- Utilize the mnemonic device too ☺

#### ○ Letter ‘L’ Activity- provide a word bank, or the feeling words on slips of paper that they can glue on and match that way- also consider verbal answers.

- Second letter 'A' Activity:
  - Brainstorm how to express these more difficult needs, and practice as a group.
  - Again, consider those who are less or non-verbal, and the methods they can use to express what they need.
- Utilize actions and or symbols to help review at the end.

We wish to thank Erin again for her contribution and invite you to submit other ideas for adaptation of *Circle of Grace* to Mary Beth Hanus (mbhanus@archomaha.org)