



Circles of Care: At a glance (grades 6–8)

Welcome to ThinkGive!

This packet of materials is designed to give you an overview of our Circles of Care program (grades 6–8). Students use the Circles of Care to not only identify the people, places, and things that are important to them, but to take action to care for and impact everyone and everything in their lives. Over the course of the program they push beyond their comfort zone and give to others in their outer Circles of Care.

Included in this packet:

- Scope + Sequence (12 lessons / 16 lessons)
- Sample Lesson Plan (Give to someone you admire)
- Program Overview + Impact

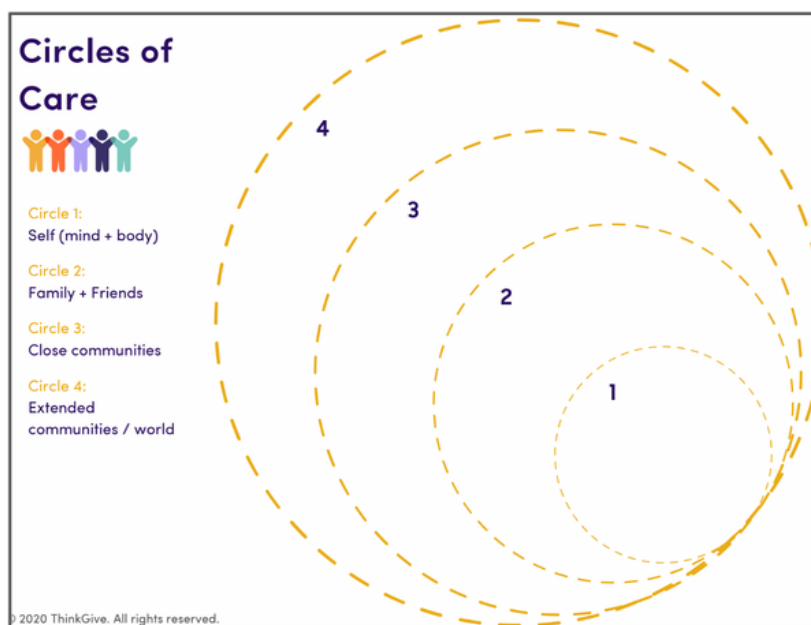
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We look forward to connecting with you!
– The ThinkGive Team



Scope + Sequence: ThinkGive Middle School / Circles of Care

Students use the Circles of Care to not only identify the people, places, and things that are important to them, but to take action to care for and impact everyone and everything in their lives. Over the course of the program they push beyond their comfort zone and give to others in their outer Circles of Care.

Lesson name	Lesson Summary	Students will Examine	Central Quote	ThinkGive Three	Themes
* Note: rows in grey are not included in the 12-prompt program					
Introduction	Students will be introduced to the central theme, Circles of Care. This theme will be woven through the entire program, so take your time introducing it. The concept of the Circles of Care not only helps students identify the people, places, and things that are important to them, but empowers them to take action to care for and impact everyone and everything in their lives. The lesson begins with students considering their changing expressions of care as they grow – and introduces the idea that we all rely on others for care. The lesson concludes by examining the idea of community and different ways we see and value communities and the roles of individuals within them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who in their Circles of Care they depend on, and who depends on them. - Their changing expressions of care in their Circles of Care. - The value of supportive communities and the roles of their members. 	<i>“Tip the world toward kindness.”</i> – Dr. Vivek Murthy	N/A	Identity Self-awareness Social awareness Social responsibility
Take care of yourself (circle #1: yourself)	ThinkGive starts with self-care both to reinforce its importance and to prepare students to care for others in all of their Circles of Care. To begin, students consider all that they’re grateful for about themselves. They are introduced to the idea that our bodies and emotions are interconnected. They consider specific emotions, and what actions they can take to move themselves toward a more regulated emotional state. As students develop their self-awareness they will learn to care for themselves by paying closer attention to their physiological and emotional responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What they are grateful for about themselves. - The connection between their physical bodies and emotions. - How they can take action to turn uncomfortable emotions into more comfortable emotions. 	<i>“An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly.”</i> – Unknown	SMALL	Gratitude Self-care Self-reflection
Be your own coach (circle #1: yourself)	It is important that students prioritize self-compassion. Not only does self-compassion boost overall well-being, it is essential for them to be able to spread kindness to others. Students are introduced to the inner critic vs. inner coach. Inner critic thoughts are unkind, limiting beliefs whereas inner coach thoughts are encouraging and compassionate. They consider the ways in which they speak to themselves and how that impacts not only their physical and emotional expressions, but how they ultimately show up in the world. As students improve their self-awareness around their inner thoughts, they will learn to manage their thoughts in a positive manner, thereby influencing their physical and emotional well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are inner critic thoughts, and how do they impact our physiology and emotions? - How they can be their own inner coach rather than inner critic. - How to recognize and manage their emotions and thoughts by strengthening their inner coach. 	<i>“Whatever you have in between your two ears, make sure it's not your own worst enemy; make it your biggest cheerleader.”</i> – Lewis Howes	TRUE	Gratitude Self-awareness Self-care Self-reflection
Give to a friend (circle #2: family + friends)	This lesson will ask students to focus on friends in their second Circle of Care. Through songs, students will learn how they can show their appreciation to their closest friends. Students begin the lesson by considering the qualities of a good friend. They analyze songs to build on their ideas, listening for what qualities the artists chose to write about. Then they think about what qualities they themselves bring to their friendships and what they can do to foster their friendships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The qualities of a good friend. - What qualities they bring to their friendships. - How friendships can change as they grow. 	<i>“A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow.”</i> – William Shakespeare	TRUE	Friendship Gratitude Self-reflection

Share with a family member (circle #2: family + friends)	This lesson will examine the vulnerability that is inherent in the act of sharing. Students likely have people in their lives with whom they feel comfortable sharing both tangible and intangible things. Their comfort levels will vary depending on their culture and how they were raised. Keep in mind this lesson focuses on family. As such, be sure to mention that ‘family’ can be what we are born into or who we choose. Ultimately, each individual gets to decide who they consider family. Encourage students to think about new ways they can share with a family member, and to step into their courage zone by sharing something that makes them feel a little vulnerable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact that sharing with a family member can have. - The power of vulnerability when sharing something about yourself. - How sharing ourselves with others in our close circles is an expression of care. 	<i>“Family gives you the roots to stand tall and strong.”</i> – Anonymous	BRAVE	Connection Gratitude Social courage Self-reflection
Give to someone you admire (circle #3: close communitites)	Students will analyze what they admire about people. They will differentiate between a skill and a character trait, and identify people in their third Circle who have admirable traits. Finally, they will think about their identity, the traits they possess, and which ones they want to cultivate in order to become someone who is admired by others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who they admire in their third Circle of Care, and for what character trait(s). - What character traits people tend to admire in others. - How they can become someone whose traits are admired by others. 	<i>“I have always been an admirer. I regard the gift of admiration as indispensable if one is to amount to something; I don't know where I would be without it.”</i> – François de La Rochefoucauld	BRAVE	Community Gratitude Identity Self-reflection Social courage
Show curiosity in someone (circle #3: close communitites)	Students will analyze the assumptions that people make about others, while acknowledging that assumptions are not inherently negative. They will examine the impact of assumptions, how they can create a divide between people and communities. Students will work on dismantling their assumptions by looking past physical appearances and showing curiosity about others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of assumptions on themselves and others. - How curiosity connects with kindness and compassion. - The importance of learning about someone’s emotional self rather than their appearance. 	<i>“In Buddha's opinion, to train in staying open and curious – to train in dissolving our assumptions and beliefs – is the best use of our human lives.”</i> – Pema Chödrön	TRUE	Equity Gratitude Inclusion Perspectives Self-awareness Self-reflection
Really see someone (circle #3: close communitites)	This lesson has students reflect on how they see people, especially those who they don’t really know in their third Circle. When we know only one story about someone, we have an incomplete understanding of them. We are all complex individuals with multiple stories. In order to really see someone, students are challenged to get beyond a single story to really see someone for who they are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What it means to really see someone. - How really seeing people in their communities can impact their perception of those communities. - How having empathy can help them connect with someone. 	<i>“If we could look into each other's hearts and understand the unique challenges each of us faces, I think we would treat each other much more gently, with more love, patience, tolerance, and care.”</i> – Marvin J. Ashton	BRAVE	Connection Gratitude Perspectives Social courage Social awareness
Notice a kindness someone gives to you (circle #3: close communitites)	Students will begin the lesson by reflecting on the actions they’ve taken so far, and learn from one another during the scavenger hunt. This lesson will encourage students to notice the good things around them. They will consider who and what they might take for granted, how to direct gratitude toward those people/places/things, and how to turn their gratitude into an action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The importance of noticing. - How to recognize what people in their third Circle of Care give to them, and who/what they might be taking for granted. - The importance of receiving and appreciating an act of kindness being given to you. 	<i>“Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously.”</i> – Ralph Waldo Emerson	SMALL	Gratitude Kindness Social awareness
Give an invitation (circle #3: close communitites)	In this lesson students will gain a better understanding of what inclusion means and what it looks like in action. Students will be encouraged to be more inclusive of people in their third Circle of Care. Students will consider how—and why—to give invitations to others. Invitations can come in many different forms, so be sure students understand that there are various types of invitations they can give.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is inclusion? - The inclusive nature of offering an invitation. - The opportunities students might have to give invitations. 	<i>“A smile is the universal welcome.”</i> – Max Eastman	BRAVE	Gratitude Inclusion Kindness Social awareness Social courage

<p>Give to someone you've never met in an extended community</p> <p>(circle #4: extended communities / world)</p>	<p>Students will consider their extended communities / the world. They will first define their extended community, and consider the variety of people that make up their extended communities. Focus on examining how our extended communities impact our identities, and the care we can offer to others in our extended communities. Finally, allow time to brainstorm ways students might impact someone they might not know. This action will likely take bravery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What groups and individuals make up their extended communities. - How their extended communities influence their identity. - How their actions can connect them with others in their extended communities. 	<p><i>"We never know how our small activities will affect others through the invisible fabric of our connectedness."</i> – Grace Lee Boggs</p>	BRAVE	<p>Community Connection Gratitude Social awareness Social courage</p>
<p>Support an extended community</p> <p>(circle #4: extended communities / world)</p>	<p>In this lesson students reflect on human rights challenges that impact people globally. They will find causes they connect with, and brainstorm opportunities to support an extended community (an individual, group, or cause). The emphasis is on small-scale impact for large-scale issues and the power of the collective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What issues we face as a global community. - How small-scale actions, especially done consistently, can have profound impact. - Impact on a larger scale comes from the collaborative actions of many. 	<p><i>"In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it."</i> – Marianne Williamson</p>	TRUE	<p>Community Gratitude Identity Self-reflection Social responsibility</p>
<p>Give to the environment</p> <p>(circle #4: extended communities / world)</p>	<p>Students will consider the various ways that they depend on the environment; and how they might care for it in return. They will explore environmental justice and learn about youth activists who are working to make a difference for under-resourced communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize how having gratitude and respect for the environment can lead to one taking action. - How environmental justice is connected to social justice. - How large issues can be faced by taking small actions. 	<p><i>"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."</i> – Native American Proverb</p>	SMALL	<p>Equity Gratitude Self-reflection Social justice Social responsibility</p>
<p>Give anonymously</p> <p>(circle #4: extended communities / world)</p>	<p>This lesson will help students understand the possible impact of an anonymous gift even if they don't witness the immediate results. Students consider both their care for people and places in their fourth Circle. Students will need to be on the lookout for opportunities to give, and consider how they observe the people and places around them in their wider world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The difference between giving anonymously and being acknowledged. - The power of taking an action with no expectation of recognition or reward. - The notion of "Pay it forward." 	<p><i>"The truest test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching."</i> – John Wooden</p>	TRUE	<p>Gratitude Kindness Social awareness</p>
<p>Give your gratitude</p>	<p>This lesson will ask students to reflect on and celebrate the gratitudes they've been recording throughout the program. Students can give their gratitude to anyone in any circle. Focus on turning their feeling of gratitude for a person/being, place, or experience into an action. This is their final gift of the program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The power of practicing gratitude. - The connection between gratitude and wellness. - How to turn gratitude into an action. 	<p><i>"Good morning. Lead with gratitude. The air in your lungs, the sky above you. Proceed from there."</i> – Lin-Manuel Miranda</p>	BRAVE	<p>Gratitude Perspectives Social awareness</p>
<p>Wrap-up</p>	<p>This lesson will focus on the student's journey through ThinkGive. Students will use a Scavenger Hunt to reflect on their gifts and discuss ways to continue giving to others in all Circles of Care. An interview and share will help students process their experience and look ahead.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why kindness/care and the ThinkGive Three matter. - How the Circles of Care impacted them and their understanding of kindness/care. - How to keep ThinkGive going to create an even bigger impact. 	<p><i>"If you have the chance to be exposed to a loving, understanding environment where the seed of compassion, loving kindness, can be watered every day, then you become a more loving person."</i> – Thich Nhat Hahn</p>	N/A	<p>Community Perspectives Self-reflection</p>

Give to someone you admire



grades 6-8



30 minutes

“I have always been an admirer. I regard the gift of admiration as indispensable if one is to amount to something; I don't know where I would be without it.” – François de La Rochefoucauld

Lesson Summary

The focus for this prompt is on Circle of Care #3: Close Communities.

Students will analyze what they admire about people. They will differentiate between a skill and a character trait, and identify people in their third Circle who have admirable traits. Finally, they will think about their identity, the traits they possess, and which ones they want to cultivate in order to become someone who is admired by others.

Students will Examine

- Who they admire in their third Circle of Care, and for what character trait(s).
- What character traits people tend to admire in others.
- How they can become someone whose traits are admired by others.



MATERIALS

Worksheet: Circles of Care ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Chart Paper
Worksheet: Skill or Character Trait? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Worksheet: Who Are You? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Give to someone you admire](#)
Jamboard: [Group Share](#)

SHARE

GRATITUDES

Students record one thing they're grateful for about someone they admire on their Worksheet: My Gratitudes ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)). Encourage them to write a specific gratitude (e.g., "I am grateful for the way my tutor patiently explained the math assignment to me without making me feel bad" vs. "I am grateful for my tutor.")

GROUP SHARE

When they're ready, they reflect on their last action. Write the word (True, Small, or Brave) that applies on the whiteboard/Jamboard: [Group Share](#).



TEACHER TIP

Have students fill out the Worksheet: My Gratitudes ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) throughout the program; this exercise will be part of the final "Give Your Gratitude" prompt. Read more here: [Practicing Gratitude \(PDF\)](#).

THINK • GIVE

Ask: What does it mean to admire someone? Brainstorm a definition.

Discuss:

- What's the difference between admiring someone for a character trait vs. a skill?
- What is the difference between admiration and respect?
- Why is it important to acknowledge the people we admire within our community?

Explain: We all admire someone. Chances are we admire them not for something they have or something they can do, but because of their character – who they are and how they treat others every day. Maybe they're honest, kind, courageous, firm, generous, or gentle. A person's character most often earns admiration.

Who Do You Admire: Brainstorm

As a class, create a list of admirable character traits (e.g., intelligence, kindness, leadership) on the whiteboard. Encourage students to focus on other people's actions, character, and choices rather than on their physical appearance or skills (e.g., one might admire a singer's voice, but that is likely the result of much practice, determination, and resilience).

Skill or Character Trait?

Hand out the Worksheet: Skill or Character Trait? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)). Students use their list of character traits to help them think about people in their third Circle of Care who possess certain traits.

Note: Students do not need to use names (e.g., if the quality is leadership, a student might write about someone who started a community garden).

Offer ideas for people they might place in their third Circle:

- Who serves you at a restaurant?
- Who is passionate about a cause (e.g., human/civil rights, climate)?
- Who cleans your school? Your neighborhood streets?
- Who helps and supports you?
- Who are people behind the scenes you could uplift with kindness?

After students fill out the worksheet, they find a partner and discuss one person they wrote about. Change partners a few times. If possible, students share a different person each time.



TEACHER TIP

Third Circle of Care: People in our close communities just beyond our friends and family (e.g., classmates, acquaintances, extended family).



VOCAB

Admire: verb; to regard (an object, quality, or person) with respect or warm approval.

Respect: verb; to regard the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others.

Skill: noun; a particular ability to do something well; expertise.

Character trait: individual parts of your personality and behavior that express who you are as a person.



TEACHER TIP

Encourage students to consider people who inspire them to be their best selves. Consider community heroes, family, friends, historical figures, fictional characters, etc.

REFLECT

Who Are You?

Using their same list of character traits, students complete the Worksheet: Who Are You? ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)), writing admirable characteristics that they personally possess. To brainstorm, they should think about compliments they've received (for skills or character traits) from others. The goal is for students to understand that by intentionally cultivating admirable qualities in themselves, they can be or become someone who others admire.

Journal

Required questions:

- What character traits do you want to cultivate?
- What actions could you take to cultivate the character traits you listed?

Optional questions:

- If you knew people admired something you were doing, would you act differently?
- What traits do you have that could help people who aren't often supported in your community?

CONNECT + CLOSE

Take Action

Explain: For this prompt, give to someone you admire (outside of your family and friends). Start by recognizing someone you admire within your third Circle of Care – your close communities. Then act to make your admiration known so that the person feels appreciated.

Brainstorm

Students brainstorm a way to give to someone they admire. Remind them that they don't have to give the gifts they have brainstormed.

Things to Consider

- The ThinkGive Three focus for this gift is Brave.
- How can you make your admiration known? What might make someone feel appreciated?
- A person is most respected for who they are rather than what they can do. Who are you? Does your character earn the admiration of others?

★ THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: simple gifts have big impact
3. Brave: step into your courage zone

★ DIGGING DEEPER

François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680). A French classical author who was one of the most active rebels of the French civil wars, the Fronde.

Closing Quote

Use this quote and questions as an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) or a quick way to wrap up the lesson.




"I have always been an admirer. I regard the gift of admiration as indispensable if one is to amount to something; I don't know where I would be without it." – François de La Rochefoucauld

- What does this quote mean to you?
- How might giving to someone you admire affect your own behavior?

Sample Gifts

- I emailed one of my all time favorite authors, whom I admire very much. My gift was simply writing her a letter telling her how much I appreciate and respect her stories.
- I wrote a letter to my piano teacher thanking him for having such a big influence on my life. He has been a huge role model for me.
- I told my next door neighbor that I learn from her every day and it made her really happy. I don't think she was expecting me to say something like that so randomly, and I'm glad that I did.

Student Journal Questions

-  Think about the character traits we discussed. Which traits would you like to nurture? Why?
-  Is it more common to admire someone you know well, or someone in an outer circle of your life? How does your admiration of people vary between the different circles?
-  Think of a time you admired someone but did not express your admiration. Why didn't you? Would you consider letting them know now? Why or why not?

Extensions

DO

Empathy Extension

With the full class or in small groups, brainstorm a list of people in your community that you admire. Students choose one person from the list and create a message of appreciation for that person. Get creative with the resources available to you! It can be a card, a video message, a poem, a scavenger hunt, etc.

WATCH

Video: [Wonder \(4:46\)](#). Scene when Auggie gets his award.

Discuss:

- “Greatness lies not in being strong but in the right using of strength. He or she is the greatest whose strength carries up the most hearts by the attraction of his own.” What does this quote mean?
- In what ways is Auggie admired?
- What did Auggie do to receive admiration?
- Do you think he made an impact on others at school? If so, how?

Video: [The Science of Character \(8:05\) \(segments\)](#). Two psychologists studied character, and mapped the character strengths that exist into 24 virtues / strengths. Everyone is a unique combination of these strengths. They found that if we focus on the strengths we already have, we’ll be happy. And if you admire the strengths in others, that strengthens relationships in others.

- Minute 2:00–2:45: The question asked: “Who do you admire and why?” Students do the exercise and use the hashtag (#love, #courage, etc).
- Minute 6:30–7:36: The question asked: “If you can be a better version of yourself, who do you want to be?” Write “I want to be _____. ” Students fill in the blank with the character strength that they most treasure in themselves or that they aspire to develop.

READ / LISTEN

Article: “Black History Month: The community member I admired most as a kid” ([PDF](#) | [website](#)).

Three high-achieving Champaign-Urbana natives were asked: Who’s the community member who you admired most as a kid?

Discuss:

- What are some common traits of the community members described in this article?
- What is the value of spotlighting people in the communities you are a part of?
- How would you feel if someone spotlighted you as someone to be admired in the community?



Program Overview + Impact

What is ThinkGive?

ThinkGive is an action-based social and emotional learning (SEL) program that fosters a culture of kindness and inclusion in classrooms. Our unique experiential learning cycle encourages students to consider other perspectives, make meaningful connections, and cultivate the belief they can positively impact their own lives and the lives of others

Four Key Components:

1. **THINK (in-class curriculum)**: Educators deliver curriculum to introduce concepts and lead discussions. Students are prompted to give according to specific themes that move them from giving to those in their comfort zone (self, friends, family) to those in their courage zone (acquaintances, community, etc.).
2. **GIVE (individual action)**: After each prompt, students take self-directed action impacting themselves and others.
3. **REFLECT (record gifts)**: Each student is assigned a personalized page on ThinkGive's student portal where they record their actions to connect them with concepts discussed in class.
4. **SHARE (class collaboration)**: Students engage with, share with, and learn from their peers on the secure teacher-monitored Team Page.



The Student Experience

ThinkGive is about self-discovery and understanding the positive effects of giving of yourself. Teachers provide guidance and encouragement, but students own their experience. They see their actions making a difference and gain agency in building kind and inclusive communities.

1



IN-CLASS CURRICULUM

Teachers introduce a giving prompt and lead discussions and activities guided by ThinkGive's curriculum. The class explores concepts like empathy and social justice, and they think about who they are and who they want to be.

2

STUDENTS GIVE

Each student decides how to give and who to give to inspired by the in-class prompt. They experience the impact their words and actions have on others, and discover how good it feels to be kind.



3



RECORD + REFLECT

Students record their gift on the ThinkGive portal. Reflective questions help them connect their individual actions to the broader concepts discussed in class.

4

ENGAGE + SHARE

Students engage with, share with, and learn from their peers on the Team Page. This collaborative component promotes digital citizenship in a secure teacher-monitored space.



5

DISCUSSION + COLLABORATION

Collaboration comes alive in the classroom with group discussion and reflection. The student experience comes full circle as they capture key learnings before setting out on the next giving prompt.



Our Curriculum

The curriculum component for each grade consists of a set of directives for giving (prompts). The list below provide examples of our elementary and middle school prompts. Each is accompanied by a 30-minute lesson plan containing activities, videos, discussion questions, and extensions that allow educators to adjust the lessons based on the needs of their students. ThinkGive offers standard program lengths of 12 or 16 lessons; but the schedule is flexible to meet educator needs.

Curriculum prompts (sample) ThinkGive elementary

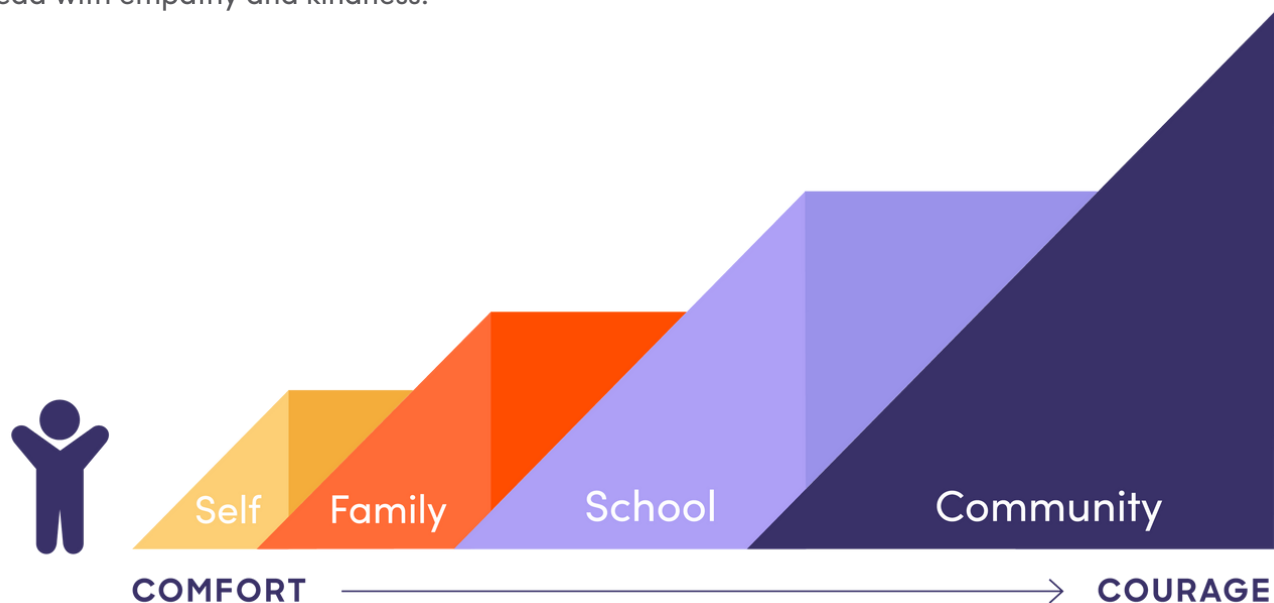
Give to yourself
Give to family
Give to a friend
Give your gratitude
Give to a student in another grade
Give to your community
Surprise someone
Give to someone you admire
Give to the environment
Give to someone you've never met

Curriculum prompts (sample) ThinkGive middle school

Connect with yourself
Give to a friend
Give to a student outside your friend group
Challenge an assumption
Really see someone
Share your story
Give an invitation
Connect with a peer you'd like to get to know
Support a cause that personally affects you
Support a cause as an ally
Challenge a limiting belief

Why Use ThinkGive?

As the program progresses, the prompts become more challenging; students are encouraged to step further and further into their courage zone. They build a strong sense of self and learn to lead with empathy and kindness.



Student Impact

ThinkGive empowers young people by giving them agency to discover their capacity to be upstanders and changemakers in their schools and communities.



Will be kinder
to others



Feel more connected to
teachers and peers



Will be a force
of good



Willing to stand up
for what's right

"ThinkGive made me recognize how I treat others, how they treat me, and how I treat myself."
– 7th grader