What is Circles?
The CIRCLES program teaches social distance and levels of intimacy through the use of six colour coded concentric circles. Starting from the centre circle, which is self, each new coloured circle represents behaviours, feelings, and actions appropriate to the distance from the centre or self.

The CIRCLES program assists students to discriminate different degrees of intimacy and adapt their behaviours accordingly. Students are asked to think about/discuss the level of talk, trust and touch which is appropriate for each circle.

Why would I use Circles teaching with my child?
The CIRCLES program provides a concrete reference to otherwise subjective and vague concepts which may be difficult for individuals with autism and other related disorders to fully understand. These concepts tend to be the "unwritten rules" of society which may need to be introduced and taught in a more structured format such as CIRCLES. The CIRCLES program can be adapted to fit the individual needs of the student and/or to address specific concerns (e.g. inappropriate touching, talking to strangers). CIRCLES teaching can also empower/equip students with knowledge of the various persons who may come into their lives and to then decide for themselves what level of intimacy is appropriate/not appropriate.

The coloured CIRCLES and their meanings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Private Purple CIRCLE** | - You are the most important person in your world.  
- No one touches you unless you want to be touched.  
- You are only in your private circle if you are alone. As soon as you can see someone, you move to another circle. |
| **2. Blue Family CIRCLE** | - There are very few people that hug you and who you hug-your mother or father, brother/sister girlfriend or boyfriend.  
- Sometimes, other family members (grandparents, aunts and uncles) may hug you or get hugs from you depending on how close you are to them |
| **3. Green Friendship CIRCLE** | - There are a few people who you are close friends with and give far away hugs to (i.e., a friendly but not intimate hug).  
- Far away hugs can be a pat on the back. |
| **4. Yellow Acquaintances CIRCLE** | - You see many people everyday who you might know but are not friends with. These are called acquaintances  
- You can choose to shake hands with acquaintances and when you are introduced to someone.  
- Sometimes acquaintances give high fives or just say, "hello" |
| **5. Orange Community Helpers CIRCLE** | - You have adults in your life who are there to help you and may get to know you very well - your teacher, your CHAP worker, hockey coach, doctor etc.  
- Nod or wave hello to people who help you  
- Sometimes, these people may touch you as part of helping you. You decide how comfortable this makes you feel. You can ask them to "stop". |
| **6. Red Stranger Circle** | - Strangers are the many people you see every day that you do not know at all.  
- You do not talk to strangers (conversations). Sometimes you might say "hi" or "excuse me" as you walk by.  
- You do not touch strangers.  
- Strangers do not touch you.  
- You decide who can touch you- you decide when to say "STOP", and when to walk away. |

**TALK, TRUST and TOUCH (the 3 T's)**
You can decide what level of talking, touching and trust there is with the people in your various coloured circles. Each level is different depending on the degree of intimacy which is required or present.

* Adapted from original Circles program by Champagne, M.P. & Walker-Hirsch, L.  