

Over 100 organizations and thousands of individuals in Ramsey County, the state of Minnesota, and throughout the nation have learned about The Wakanheza Project and are using the principles and strategies to effectively prevent family violence by creating more welcoming environments for children, young people, and families:

- The Minnesota Children’s Museum and Children’s Home Society & Family Services have used The Wakanheza Project with staff and volunteers to enhance their customer service practices. The Museum has brought The Wakanheza Project to children’s museums around the nation as a part of its Promising Practice Replication Award from the Association of Children’s Museums;
- Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota partners with Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health to implement The Wakanheza Project with organizations and communities throughout Minnesota and the nation;
- Women’s Advocates, Inc. utilizes The Wakanheza Project to inspire significant enhancements in their domestic violence shelter and has shared what they have learned with shelters throughout the community;
- The Saint Paul Public Library incorporates The Wakanheza Project as a core element of their employee training and performance appraisals. The Ramsey County Public Libraries are implementing The Wakanheza Project throughout their system;
- In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, schools and educational systems throughout Minnesota (including Saint Paul Public Schools), are implementing The Wakanheza Project as a tool for creating more effective, welcoming learning environments; and
- Faith communities organized through the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches are using The Wakanheza Project to create more welcoming congregations for the families and communities they serve.



www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph | search The Wakanheza Project | 651-266-2597

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The Wakanheza Project™

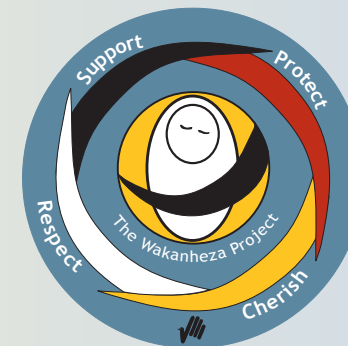
creating welcoming environments

“Wakanheza literally means sacred being. It is the Dakota word for child, reflecting for all of us what children really are and should be considered to be: sacred beings.”

Gabrielle Strong,
Grotto Foundation
Native Language Revitalization Initiative

We have all witnessed or experienced parents having difficult times in public with their children, and times when we may have felt uncomfortable with young people. People often would like to help out and make the situation better, if they knew what to say or do.

The Wakanheza Project™ teaches individuals, agencies, businesses, and communities to use principles and strategies that prevent or de-escalate stressful situations in public to create more welcoming environments for children, young people, families, and adults.



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The Wakanheza Project™ is built around 6 principles that allow individuals and communities to better connect with and provide welcoming, healthy environments and interactions for children, young people, and families.

The Wakanheza Project Principles

Judgment: Recognize, and then suspend our judgments of others. If you approach a situation judging what you perceive to be a badly behaved parent/adult or young person, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for you to connect in an understanding and helpful way.

Culture: Open ourselves to all cultures and the opportunity to see beyond differences so that we may share kindness with all people.

Powerlessness: Understand that many/most acts of violence arise from a sense of powerlessness. This appreciation can change our perception of people's reactions during times of high stress.

Empathy and Respect: Embrace our ability to show understanding and genuinely offer to help.

Environment: Recognize that environments have significant impacts on behaviors. Create physical and social environments that enhance people's sense of feeling cared about and welcomed.

The Moment: The Wakanheza Project is about freeing ourselves to suspend judgment, understand the impacts of powerlessness and environment, appreciate culture, and practice empathy and respect in the moment.

Below are strategies to help create welcoming environments.

What You Need To Do Before You Act

Acknowledge your own judgments: While it is difficult if not impossible to stop making judgments, we can choose to acknowledge our judgments and put them aside.

Assess the environment: Intentionally look at the situation to understand what is going on in order to find options to help others. If you see people in danger of serious harm, alert the appropriate authorities.

Assess yourself: Quickly decide whether you can step into the situation. If you think you may be able to help, intervene early. If you think you may make the situation worse, find someone who can help.

Act in the moment: We cannot change the past or predict the future. What we can do is offer genuine empathy and help in any given moment.

Here Are Some Ways To Help

Offer assurance through a smile or a nod.

Show empathy and imagine yourself in the other person's shoes.

Distract or redirect their attention away from the stressful situation.

Find something positive to say about the child, young person, or adult.

Offer encouragement about something positive that you see in the situation.