

# Helping Your Child Step Into a Christ-Centered Emotional Identity

If someone asked your children to describe themselves, what might they say? If you were asked that question, what would you say?

Chances are good that we and our children might not mention our emotions. Yet, they're a very important part of our identity.

Knowing our emotions matters because feelings influence behaviors. Would you agree that if you're angry, you may not behave in the ways you prefer? When you're anxious, do you recognize you don't behave the same as when you're at peace? Feelings influence much. How about being ignored? Offended? Scared? Uncertain? Enthusiastic? Puzzled? Annoyed?

Helping children identify their emotions and name them accurately can help them process their feelings well. They can learn if they need help to do so, perhaps by talking with you. They can learn how some emotions cause others. This is essential so they deal with what's really going on. For example, they may truly be angry, but it was triggered by jealousy or fear or hate, confusion, perfectionism or disappointment.

Are you raising boys? They have as many feelings as girls, but often don't have the vocabulary to name them. Girls and women seem to have a natural thesaurus for emotions. For example, Women can be frustrated, angry, upset, disappointed, concerned and irritated. Guys are angry. That's their word. Certainly, there are factors that won't make this always true, but when I teach on this, the majority of men in the audience nod to indicate they agree.

As I wrote in the first blog in this series, it's wise for parents to think strategically and plan intentionally about who they want their children to be. You may do nothing more important than raise children well, so spending time thinking about who you want them to be is time well spent. That's an understatement!

What are the emotions you'd love your children to have consistently? Or how would you like them to describe themselves? As I explained last Monday in a blog about having a healthy intellectual identity, I recently taught these concepts to a large group of 7th-graders. I asked them to tell me what would be a high compliment in the emotional identity category. Before you look at their answers, how would you like your children to answer this question?

- Loving
- Caring
- Stable
- Kind and loving
- Friendly, joyful, happy, compassionate
- Happy, joyful, resilient
- Loving
- Joyful, grateful, kind-hearted
- Humble, mature, stable
- Joyful, happy, stable
- Trustworthy
- Joyous
- Optimistic
- In control of emotions

As I ended last week's blog:

What do you want to be true about your children emotionally? What's your bullseye? Do they know that? Would they agree with you? How must you parent for this to be their reality?

As we say at Celebrate Kids, "Wishing it so won't make it so."

We can't just wish this identity for our children. Talking about it isn't enough. It is, of course, helpful and wise, but to assure they define themselves in the ways we value, you'll have to guide them, walk with them, affirm them, correct them and maybe more. Are you up to the task? If not, adjust your expectations and change your bullseye, or you and your children will be disappointed. Discouragement can set in.

Having a goal matters. Working to make it a reality is loving. Make a plan now. Your children will benefit. {eo}

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