

# LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE

Life-affirming resources for parents, grandparents, and guardians

## HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT IDENTITY



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## INTRODUCTION: TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS



One of the first things to pop up when you type in "talking with your children about identity" is a webpage from Planned Parenthood that states, "Parents need to know how to discuss sexual orientation and gender identity with their kids. Learn how to talk and support your children if they're LGBTQ."

There is nothing wrong with talking to your kids about sexuality and helping them grow comfortable with themselves as human beings. The problem is when we, as parents, role models, guardians and educators, tell our children that their entire identity is wrapped up in how they feel, and is something that they can always control and manipulate.

We want our kids to be happy. But wanting our kids to be happy in the short-term is not always the loving thing to do. As a parent or guardian of a child who is under the legal age of adulthood, our responsibility is to care for the child, to guide them, and to provide sustainable building blocks for them to grow into adulthood. In the case of promoting and enforcing transgenderism, one could argue that the opposite is taking place; instead of guiding them, we are creating an environment of confusion. Instead of providing sustainable building blocks, we are tearing down some of the most basic facts about our human biology and replacing them with ideology.

If you're a parent or guardian who 1) is unsure of how to approach talking with your child about sexuality, 2) has a child who is struggling with their sense of identity, or 3) wants to learn more about gender ideology and its effects on children -- this booklet is for you.

The most important takeaway is that your child feel confident about where they come from and who they really are. The best way to do that is to help them know they are seen and loved no matter what their feelings tell them.

We hope this booklet provides some of the necessary tools for the wellbeing of you and your child.

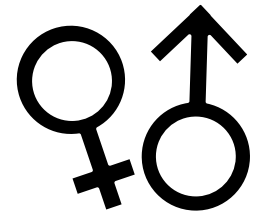
For Life,

The LifeCanada National Team

## TERMINOLOGY

*There are rare instances of children being born intersex (known as hermaphroditism). These genetic anomalies are an exception to the binary nature of humanity's division into male and female.*

- **Sex** - The state of being male or female, anatomically.
- **Gender** - Transgender activists view "gender" as what a person believes, thinks, or feels their sexuality to be.
- **Gender dysphoria** - A state of severe distress or unhappiness caused by feeling that one's gender identity does not match one's sex as registered at birth. (*Oxford Dictionary*)
- **Transgender** - A broad term that, among others, refers to:
  - People who believe their "gender" differs from their bodily sex
  - People who dress as the opposite sex
  - Drag performers (those who perform as the opposite sex)
  - People who believe they are neither male nor female
  - People who believe they are a combination of male and female



*"Identifying as transgender does not necessarily mean that an individual has taken hormones or undergone surgery in attempts to align their outward gender expression with their internal gender identity...There is no legal, medical, or psychological criteria or diagnosis to establish exactly what being "transgender" means. The person making the claim is the sole determiner of what it means in relationship to his or her personal situation." - **Focus on the Family***

- **Cis or cisgender** - A term used to mean the opposite of "transgender", meaning, those who have always identified with their biological sex - men as male and women as female.

*"We know from biology that a person's sex is genetically determined at conception and present in every cell of the body."  
-Most Rev. Michael F. Burbidge*

## LIES OUR KIDS TELL THEMSELVES



### Lie #1: “What I feel defines who I am.”

A teenager’s feelings can ebb and flow depending on what is influencing them, be it hormones, peers, media or all of the above at the same time.

If your teen sees their feelings as the highest truth, whatever they feel is right becomes the truth to them. They will make decisions based on their happiness, because happiness feels good, and they may see anyone who questions their emotional truth – their feelings about their purpose, freedoms, gender or relationships – as an enemy to what is right.

Share your own stories: Recount a time when you overcame a lie and it changed your emotions. “I used to think that my value to the team depended on how many points I scored – and that made me feel miserable after every game. But once I realized my performance didn’t define me, I felt more confident on the court.”

*Suggested topic for discussion: “Is it possible for truth to be defined by feelings if you and I feel differently about an issue?”*

### Lie #2: “A relationship will complete me.”

It’s normal for children and teens to notice and crave the affection of the opposite sex. Especially in the tender years of teenhood, the most fundamental question is: Am I worthy of pursuit?

However, if a young person comes to believe they are only worthy if someone wants a relationship with them, that lie will likely result in a preoccupation with self-image and romance. This could lead them down a slippery slope of seeking happiness through unhealthy relationships.

As a parent, guardian, or loved one, you have the opportunity to help them see that only God can satisfy their deepest desires. Their worth is not based on another person’s evaluation, and neither should their happiness.

### Lie #3: “I’m not attractive enough.”

You might be tempted to chalk up this lie to petty, immature stuff, but a poor body image can quickly morph into deep insecurities, an obsession with “the look,” depression and unhealthy romantic relationships and choices. It’s vital you help your child fend off this lie. Give them compliments that affirm, not only their body, but also their soul. Fill them with a sense of God-esteem, rather than self-esteem by helping them see themselves in the way God sees and loves them. Be aware of how you look at and talk about other people, especially women – and yourself. Celebrate the variety of beauty and the attention to detail that God has woven into male and female DNA.

## WHAT CAN I DO AS A PARENT?

- First and foremost, if you and your spouse are raising your family together, it is vital that you be united in your approach on how to respond to your gender-confused child. Added stress and conflict will certainly be picked-up on by your child, and it will make helping him or her more difficult.
- Children who experience gender dysphoria are often highly sensitive. For the sake of smoothing things over, it may be tempting to agree with or even encourage your child's wishes to change their body. But this type of reactive accommodation is not the remedy to a healthier sense of self in such children. There are ways of affirming your child without making everything about their sexuality.
- Children also need help dealing with disappointment and frustration. Remember the times you were young and experienced growing pains and show compassion accordingly. Your child will need assistance (whether from you, or a professional navigating their thoughts and feelings related to gender dysphoria.
- Sometimes a child's symptoms of struggle serve as indicators to the general wellbeing of the family. Be aware of how these symptoms may unknowingly be caused by family dynamics and consider what changes could be helpful.
- Explain to your child that it is okay for a boy or girl to have interests that are different from "most" boys and girls. This shouldn't have bearing on their biological sex.

*If these issues are affecting your family dynamics, consider seeking help from a trained family therapist with an unbiased perspective. It could be the stepping stone to achieving harmony in your household.*



## BEING A ROLE MODEL



What is sometimes missed in the discussion of raising children amidst the question of transgenderism is the importance of being a good role model. It starts with having a healthy body image. It's worth asking yourself, "Am I able to look past (or address) the things I don't like about myself while remembering that God made me in His image?" If you want your children to have a healthy relationship with their body, work on doing the same for yourself. Most parenting happens through osmosis (unconscious learning), so the way you treat yourself through actions and words has a big impact on how your children develop their own ideas of themselves and their surroundings.

Filling yourself with God-esteem (the way God sees you, His precious and unique creation) rather than self-esteem (your flawed perceptions of yourself) will help you and children have a good understanding of who you really are.

*Remember, good attitudes toward life are usually caught rather than taught.*



## ENGAGING YOUR CHILD IN CONVERSATION

Your child's age, and how close you are with them, will depend on how you approach a conversation about sexual orientation and gender identity (especially their own!). Here are a few pointers from Dr. Michelle Watson Canfield on how to engage in conversation with your child if they have expressed gender dysphoria or same-sex attraction:

1. Begin by assessing your relationship with your child; where would you say the two of you are on a scale of zero to ten (with ten being the closest)? If your number is *five or below*, Dr. Canfield suggests waiting to talk with your child about their sexual orientation. Hold off until you've connected with them about other areas of their life that have less potential for misunderstanding, hurt, hostility, arguments etc.
2. If and when you feel it is the right time to initiate a conversation, remember to lead with curiosity and not criticism.
3. Be sure to listen by talking *with* your child, and not *at* them. This should be a time for open dialogue and mutual respect.
4. If you feel it's appropriate, end by sharing your thoughts, beliefs, and convictions about the situation.

## DINNER TALK: QUESTIONS TO GET THE CONVERSATION GOING

Marianne Hering for Focus on the Family has some additional conversation starters to get to know your child better:

- *When do you feel that you're not worth as much as others?*
- *How do your friends show they value you?*
- *If you were on display at a collectibles show, how would you describe yourself? (Listen, and then read Genesis 1:27 together.)*
- *What can I do to help you feel valued at home?*

*Together make a list of the ways your child was "fearfully and wonderfully made." Then during the week, affirm your child's gifts and personality traits.*



## LOVING, NO MATTER WHAT



Walking alongside your child while they ask questions about their identity and reality can be a challenging process. We know that every family carries baggage and that baggage can sometimes get in the way of loving one another. What we hope for on your journey throughout your developing relationship with your child is to always ask yourself:

***How can I love my child even when they makes choices other than what I would prefer or choose for them?***



*Seek professional help for you and your child if these issues lead to depression, self-harm or deep hopelessness. You don't have to go through this alone.*

*Call Focus on the Family Canada at 1.800.661.9800 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Pacific time) to find the resources you need. Learn more at [FocusOnTheFamily.ca](https://www.FocusOnTheFamily.ca).*

## FURTHER READING AND CITATIONS

### **Bishop Burbridge's letter on gender ideology**

<https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/bishop/public-messages/2021/letter-by-bishop-michael-f-burbidge-on-%E2%80%9Ca-catechesis-on-the-human-person-and-gender-ideology-%E2%80%9D/>

**A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology by Bishop Burbridge** <https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/bishop/public-messages/2021/a-catechesis-on-the-human-person-and-gender-ideology/>

### **FOCUS on the Family**

"Helping children with gender identity confusion"

"How to talk with your daughter about sexual orientation, gender identity, and same-sex attraction"

### **Recommended reading:**

*When Harry Became Sally* by Ryan T. Anderson, 2018

*The Secular Creed: Engaging Five Contemporary Claims* by Rebecca McLaughlin, 2021

*Secure Daughters, Confident Sons: How Parents Guide Their Children into Authentic Masculinity and Femininity* by Glenn Stanton, 2011

***Train up a child in the way he should go; even  
when he is old he will not depart from it.***

*Proverbs 22:6*



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