

RAISING

Emotionally  
Healthy

KIDS

*Help for Parents*

ELIZA HUIE

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To my children.  
(3 John 1:4)



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## Series introduction

Raising kids is a daunting endeavor for even the most skilled parents. The challenge is compounded by the high-tempo lives we live. Between work, school, practices, recitals, games, youth group, performances, time with friends, and the myriad of other things demanding our time, parenting feels more like a logistical nightmare than a divine call to shape the lives of our children.

We have partnered with 10Publishing to produce the Raising Kids series. These resources have been written to bring welcome help to parents who may be feeling overwhelmed by the many challenges parenting brings. The series contains short books on vital issues parents face in today's day and age, as well as issues parents of every generation wrestle with. Issues like a self-made identity, sex, gender fluidity, our results-driven culture, grace-centered

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parenting, technology, and social media are all covered in these books. The authors write from a deep understanding of God's Word coupled with their own experience of raising kids, making each book rich with practical and personal wisdom that is sure to benefit any parent.

These short, easy-to-read books do not attempt to be exhaustive manuals on any one of the topics. Instead, they offer strategic insights that are timeless and immediately applicable. The goal is not to fully outfit you for an expedition over Everest but to give you a few secure handholds and footholds that will help you hang on and advance up the mountain of raising kids.

The world in which children are growing up is full of uncertainties and challenges. As parents, it can be hard to know how to help them manage their own emotions, and keep hold of hope and truth. In *Raising Emotionally Healthy Kids*, Eliza Huie explains how parents can give their children grace-filled responses that will point to God's faithfulness in all the emotional ups and downs of life.

**Curtis W. Solomon**

Director, The Biblical Counseling Coalition

## Why read this book?

Numbers provide perspective. When it comes to children and emotional health, the numbers are concerning. Research indicates that nearly one in three adolescents will meet the criteria for an anxiety disorder by the age of eighteen.<sup>1</sup> Other studies reveal that one in six children between the ages of six and seventeen have already been diagnosed with a mental illness.<sup>2</sup> Pew Research reported that the number of teenagers who experienced depression increased by 59% over a ten-year period.<sup>3</sup> New studies will soon reveal more about the emotional impact of bullying, social media, and excessive exposure to traumatizing news and images, as well as the effects living through the global pandemic of 2020 has had on children's mental health. There has been an alarming increase in suicide among children and

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teens, and growing diagnoses of mental health disorders are being assigned to kids at earlier ages. All this confirms to parents that there are good reasons to be concerned about their child's mental and emotional health.

But numbers may not be the motivating factor in your desire to learn how to raise emotionally healthy kids. Perhaps your own struggle with emotional health is compelling you to be attentive to your child's emotional state. Or maybe you just want to do all you can to help your kids develop well in all areas of their life, which includes their mental well-being.

As a counselor, I get asked many questions about kids and mental health. The ones listed below are just a sampling of those asked by parents wanting to help their children as they grow up in a world plagued with emotional distress. Maybe you have asked some of these questions or ones like them.

*“What are the signs of depression in children?”*

*“When should I be concerned about my child's emotional health?”*

*“How do I help a suicidal teen?”*

*“What are some healthy ways to help kids navigate the emotional challenges they face today?”*

## Why read this book?

*“How do I get my teenage son to open up and talk to me?”*

*“Can you recommend resources for an elementary-aged girl who hates her body?”*

*“At what age should I consider counseling for my child? Is there an age that is too young?”*

*“How do I know if my child is struggling with mental health or if this is just a phase of teenage angst?”*

*“Does my child need to be on medication for their emotional struggles?”*

Children today face emotional struggles at earlier ages and at deeper levels than any other generation. Many of the struggles they commonly face were not issues when their parents were growing up. While their parents did experience emotional challenges as kids, anxiety, depression, addiction, identity struggles, and general mental health issues were problems of adulthood not childhood.

The numbers mentioned above and the struggles kids face today have left parents deeply concerned for their child’s emotional health. The prevalence of how often these questions, and many like them, are asked reveals parents’ acute need for direction. Parents are desperate to know what they can do to raise emotionally healthy

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children. If you find yourself asking questions like the ones above, you are not alone. If you are a parent who desires to raise up emotionally healthy children, this book is for you. If you are a parent in the midst of walking with a struggling child, I pray you find help in these pages.

What follows are five helpful tips to guide you as you parent through the ups and downs of emotions. Each chapter offers practical help on how to nurture the emotional health of children. You will gain an understanding of what promotes emotional health and learn signs that indicate your child may be struggling. The tips, though brief, provide direction on how to engage with the emotional struggles children face, and how to offer help and lasting hope anchored to the enduring promises of God.

This book is not a formula. As much as I would love to offer you a few simple steps toward a solution that would ensure your child never has to deal with emotional or mental health struggles, children are unique individuals. We must love them as people, not solve them as problems. What I will offer is counsel to foster emotional health in your child and also in you.

The tips I share are offered from my experience

## Why read this book?

as a biblical counselor, as a clinical mental health professional, and as a parent. My husband and I raised three children, and I share some advice taken from our successes as well as our failures. We are not perfect parents. I am not a faultless counselor. But God has given us incredible grace in all we faced, and that same grace is available to you. We all need the Lord's help in raising our children. We all need prayer as we parent. As you start this book, know that I have prayed for you. As you begin, this is my prayer for all the parents who read this book:

*Dear God,  
Care for the parents who have picked up this book.  
When they are afraid, bring courage; when they are hurting, provide comfort; when they are discouraged, give hope. Remind them that as much as they love their child, your love for their child is infinitely greater. You have specifically chosen them to parent this child, and you will equip them for all that they face. Remind them that nothing is outside of your control and care. Guide them as they seek to attend to the emotional well-being of their children, and help them to be conduits of your love and grace to their children.  
In Jesus' name, amen.*



## TIP 1

# Nurture them wholly

I remember the day we left hospital after our first child was born. Before we could leave, a nurse was required to check that we had properly secured our tiny baby boy into the infant car seat. Bundled up for the chilly February ride home, our son looked like a football with a head attached to it. Being complete amateurs at parenting, we were glad when we received the nurse's approval on our bundling and buckling skills. After passing the test of securing him sufficiently, we were ready to go home.

She then handed us a single sheet of paper with instructions on diapering, feeding, and sleeping. She also asked if we had any questions. We both

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honestly had no idea what questions we should even ask, so mustering up as much confidence as we could fake, we lied and said we were good to go. If parenting could be summed up on a single piece of paper, we had better act like we got this and hope to convince her we should be trusted with this little life. It worked and she wished us the best. Still faking confidence, I casually folded the paper and stuck it in the diaper bag, and off we went on a most important life-long journey, completely clueless.

In the days, months, and years ahead my husband and I became far more comfortable in our abilities to care for little ones. This was mainly because we quickly realized we would need more guidance than that single piece of paper. We read many books, listened to tons of advice, asked endless questions of other parents, and prayed like crazy. Like most parents, as our family grew, so did our knowledge about child safety, nutrition, discipline, education, child development, and so on. And like most parents, we sought to create the best possible environment for our children to be healthy and safe. But that is far from all there is to parenting. From the first day we found out we were going to be parents, we knew we had the

## Nurture them wholly

responsibility not only to nurture the physical health of the children the Lord would bring into our family, but also to nurture their spiritual and emotional health.

In light of this, we prayed even more. We prayed for ourselves and for our children regularly. We intentionally invested in teaching them about God in their day-to-day life. We sang songs about God and memorized his Word with them. We read and reread countless children's story Bibles and watched hours of VeggieTales. We also sought to faithfully live out in front of them what it means to follow Jesus, love God, and love others. Christian parents want nothing more than for their children to know and understand the gospel and to follow Jesus from a young age. So we invested in their spiritual health every day, knowing that there is more to life than just their physical well-being. Their flourishing is not only about tending to their physical bodies but about investing in their eternal souls.

Embracing the reality that children are embodied souls, we took seriously the stewardship to care for them both physically and spiritually. Intertwined in this was the understanding that we had a vital influence over and responsibility

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for their emotional health as well. This is why I encourage parents to nurture children wholly. Parents must attend to the whole life of the child. Just as we should attend to the physical care of a child, we should also attend to their spiritual and emotional care.