

POP-UP CONVERSATIONS

My Kid Feels Pressure to Be Perfect

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• **Intro:** Welcome to our Pop-Up Parent Conversation—"My Kid Feels Pressure to Be Perfect"! We're so grateful for your presence, and for investing your time in this hour-long guided conversation on behalf of your kids. Today we're going to dive into a topic that's a real source of tension in many homes—the pressure our kids feel to be perfect in everything they do. We've asked Dr. Cindy Wilson to offer a short introduction to the issues, challenges, and strategies that surround this issue. Dr. Wilson is a leader with Connected Families, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing parents and kids with practical tools for growing in their relationship with each other while they deepen their relationship with God. Let's watch... *(Or share the video with parents ahead of time, so that they can come together and discuss what they saw.)*

• **Dr. Cindy Wilson (Video - 10 minutes):** "Why Kids Feel Pressure to Be Perfect, and How We Can Help"

• **Ask (5 minutes):** First, what are your initial reactions to what you just heard? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

• **Say:** It's hard to watch our kids put themselves under so much pressure in life. And we wonder what we might have done, if anything, to impact their perfection-addiction. We want our kids to work hard and succeed in whatever they do, but are they getting the wrong message from us? Or is the pressure coming more from outside sources—comparison with others on social media, for example.

• **Let's Talk (Pairs or Trios - 15 minutes):** We're going to split into Pairs/Trios now for a 15-minute conversation, then we'll gather back together to debrief what each Pair/Trio talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we'd like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you're leading this online)*

- **What conversations, if any, have you had with your kids about the pressure they feel to be perfect?**
- **What have you noticed about how and why your kids feel pressure to be perfect?**
- **What messages do you give your kids about trying hard and succeeding? Do you think those messages help them deal with the pressure to be perfect? Why or why not?**
- **How have you tried to frame your own perspective on perfectionism, and what's happened as a result?**

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• **Debrief (Whole Group – 7 minutes):** Gather back together and **ask:** What stuck out to you in your conversations, and why? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

• **Say:** Dr. Wilson help us explore some possible ways to help our kids with the pressure to be perfect. She points to “helpful messages” we can send to our kids who are struggling with perfectionism—like, “You are loved no matter what” and “Our identity and value isn’t based on our perfect success in life, but on our relationship with Jesus” and “It’s safe to fail.” She suggests that we switch our feedback to our kids from their outcomes to the process itself. We want our kids to know we’re proud because of their hard work, balance, and responsibility. She calls perfectionism “the measuring stick that gets taller the closer we stand to it.” That’s why kids who feel pressure to be perfect are more likely to struggle with anxiety and depression. We need practical ways to accompany our perfectionistic kids, helping them live in greater freedom—let’s spend some time talking with your partner(s) about about that...

• **Let’s Talk (Pairs or Trios – 10 minutes):** We’re going to split back into Pairs/Trios now for a 10-minute conversation, then we’ll gather back together to debrief what each Pair/Trio talked about. Reference your handout for the questions we’d like you to tackle together... *(or post the questions into three-person chat rooms if you’re leading this online)*

- **What’s something you’ve tried as a parent that seems to help your kids release their grip from the pressure to perform?**
- **In what ways do you model freedom from perfectionism—both in your relationship with God, and your everyday life?**
- **What does “following Jesus” look like as you face the challenges of parenting your perfectionistic kids?**

• **Debrief (Whole Group – 7 minutes):** Gather back together and **ask:** What’s something you heard, or said, in your Pair/Trio that offers real help for you as you parent kids struggling to navigate a polarizing culture? *(Gather feedback, interact, and ask follow-up questions. If you're online, you could choose to have parents give feedback in the Chat instead of spoken. Be sure to take notes on spoken responses in the Chat.)*

• **Closing Prayer:** God, sometimes it’s a struggle to find ways to help our kids feel freedom from perfectionism. I sometimes struggle with this myself? We long to experience the freedom of your grace, and to help create a home ecosystem that is infused with grace. Please help us and guide us.