



Renewing Identity
**HELPING CHILDREN HEAL
FROM TRAUMA**

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"By reminding children
WHO THEY TRULY ARE..."

RENEWING IDENTITY: HELPING CHILDREN HEAL FROM TRAUMA

When a child experiences trauma—whether through abuse, neglect, or systemic injustice—the deepest wounds are often invisible. Trauma doesn't just leave scars on the body or mind; it distorts a child's very sense of identity. They may begin to believe lies such as "I'm unworthy," "I'm dirty," or "I don't matter."

At Kids Alive, we believe healing begins with renewing identity. By sharing with children who God created them to be, how to know God, and to believe that they are chosen, loved, and powerful—we begin to replace the false messages of trauma with life-giving truths rooted in God's love and affirmed by evidence-based care.

WHY IDENTITY MATTERS IN HEALING

Research in trauma care shows that healing is most effective when identity is affirmed and integrated into care. Children don't just need safety and support—they need to know they are seen, heard, and valued.

Identity-Based Trauma-Responsive Care, a model we practice across our programs, weaves together the best of trauma-informed principles with biblical truths. This approach acknowledges both the psychological impact of trauma and the spiritual reality that every child is God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10).

"...that every child
IS GOD'S MASTERPIECE."



THE TRUTH THAT TRANSFORMS

Through our work, we guide children to embrace five powerful identity statements:

- I am God's Child – replacing abandonment with belonging (John 1:12).
- I am Clean – countering shame with restoration (1 John 1:9).
- I am Chosen with a Purpose – replacing meaninglessness with significance (John 15:16).
- I am Powerful – overcoming powerlessness with agency and strength (Philippians 4:13).
- I am Art – transforming feelings of defectiveness with the truth of being God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10).

Each of these truths directly addresses a core wound of trauma and helps children move from survival to thriving.

MODELING IDENTITY FOR HEALING

Identity work isn't just for children—it begins with us. Caregivers, mentors, and ministry leaders must first reflect on these truths in our own lives so that we can model them authentically. When we consistently live out dignity, patience, and compassion, children see what safe and healthy love looks like and begin to believe it for themselves.

Sometimes the most healing thing we can do is not to lecture or fix—but simply to be present. Showing up consistently tells a child, "You are worth my time. You are not alone."

A PATH TOWARD TRANSFORMATION

Renewing identity is not a quick process. It's a lifelong journey of walking alongside children, helping them untangle trauma's lies, and guiding them toward God's truth. In this sacred work, we witness incredible transformation: children once silenced by fear find their voice, those weighed down by shame discover freedom, and those who felt invisible realize they are cherished.

When children are rooted in their true identity, they not only heal—they thrive.

Reminding children they are
CHOSEN, CLEAN, GOD'S CHILD, ART, POWERFUL

RENEWING IDENTITY: INTEGRATING FAITH AND EVIDENCE-BASED HEALING

Children who have experienced trauma often internalize distorted messages about themselves—messages rooted in shame, fear, and rejection. Healing begins when children are gently reminded of the truth of who they are: chosen, cherished, capable, and deeply loved by God. This identity work is both personal and therapeutic, addressing trauma wounds such as worthlessness, powerlessness, and isolation. For those who care for and support children, it's important to reflect on these truths personally so we can authentically model them in our relationships. These identity statements are not just words— they're tools that help reinforce safety, dignity, and hope as we walk alongside children on their journey of healing.

TRAUMA-INDUCED IDENTITIES	BIBLICAL IDENTITIES	COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT) SELF-IDENTITY GOALS	EVIDENCE-BASED ALIGNMENT
Abandonment	"I am God's Child"	Secure Attachment & Belonging	CBT seeks to promote transcendence beyond trauma and to establish unconditional acceptance. This is based on a foundation for healthy self-worth, not dependent on performance or circumstances. Being God's Child directly reflects this identity as we claim Him and are accepted to be called Children of God (John 1:12).
Shame	"I am Clean"	Shame Resilience & Self-Acceptance	Claiming "I am Clean" directly counters trauma-based shame and self-blame. CBT works to separate identity from traumatic experiences - "I am not what happened to me." By promoting psychological cleansing from toxic shame, 1 John 1:9 clearly states we are "cleansed from all unrighteousness". Also, part of 1 John 1:9 calls for confession. While children are never responsible for their abuse they are often not allowed to be passive participants. Because of this, they carry shame for what they were forced to do. Through "confessing" (or discussing) their feelings of shame with their therapist or caregivers, they can stop blaming themselves and accept their cleanliness.

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Meaningless	"I am Chosen with a Purpose"	Meaning-Making & Self-Efficacy	CBT emphasizes developing a sense of agency and personal significance. Both the CBT emphasis and biblical identity help children see themselves as valuable contributors rather than victims, fostering hope and motivation for change. John 15:16 states that they are chosen for eternal impact.
Powerlessness	"I am Powerful"	Personal Agency & Empowerment	A core CBT principle that individuals can influence their thoughts, feelings and behaviors is based in personal agency. Powerfulness addresses learned helplessness from trauma and builds confidence to break negative generational cycles. Philippians 4:13 tells them they can have the power to live lives of dignity in all circumstances.
Defectiveness	"I am Art"	Intrinsic Worth & Authentic Self	CBT promotes self-acceptance independent of external validation. This aligns with the biblical truth of recognizing inherent value and uniqueness, countering the "damaged goods" mentality common in trauma survivors. Ephesians 2:10 emphasizes their uniqueness as God's masterpiece.



WHO IS KIDS ALIVE INTERNATIONAL?

Kids Alive empowers abused, neglected, and vulnerable children in some of the hardest places. Join us in creating thriving families and communities by sharing hope to children through restorative education, family strengthening, protective care, and justice advocacy.

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