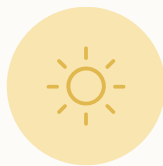


# The Goby Parent Guide

THE 5 BIG THINGS EVERY CHILD NEEDS



# What's Inside

NUMBER ONE

**SAFETY – 5**

---

NUMBER TWO

**IDENTITY – 9**

---

NUMBER THREE

**GRATITUDE – 13**

---

NUMBER FOUR

**RESILIENCE – 17**

---

NUMBER FIVE

**PURPOSE – 21**

# Introduction

There are times as a parent when your child is really upset, crying, frustrated and you realize... you don't know what they *need*. You've probably had that moment too. I cared. I was trying. I just didn't know what would actually help.

Those moments don't disappear as they grow, they just look different. Your child may not be sitting on the floor crying anymore, but something can still feel off. They get overwhelmed. Frustration comes quickly. They shut down. They compare themselves. Or they seem fine on the outside, but you can tell something underneath isn't settled.

You're trying to help and do the right thing. You ask yourself, *what do they actually need from me right now?*

That question matters.

Most of us don't struggle with caring. **We struggle with clarity.** We want to help, but we don't always know what actually helps.

When you're unsure, it's easy to try a little bit of everything – say more, do more, fix more, step in faster, etc.

But it's not about doing more. It's about focusing on what matters most. When you focus on the right things, everything else starts to build from there.

That's what this Goby Parent Guide is about. Not giving you more to do, but helping you understand what your child *actually* needs. This isn't theory, it's what I've learned as a father and as someone who has battled for mental wellness. Simple things. Steady things. The kind that meet your child where they are right now.

Over the years, I began to see that most challenges that our children face can be traced back to five core needs. When those needs are met, they feel more steady. They respond differently. They carry less pressure. When those needs are unmet, you see it in their behavior, in their emotions, in how they see themselves.

Think of this guide as a framework you can come back to. You'll begin to recognize what your child needs and you'll have the foundation built to give it to them. You don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to get every moment right. You just need a place to begin.



NUMBER ONE

# Safety

A PLACE TO BE FULLY KNOWN



# Safety

## A PLACE TO BE FULLY KNOWN

There's a different kind of moment that comes as your kids get older. They stop telling you things. Not all at once. Just less. I remember asking one of my kids, "How was your day?"

"Good."

Short. Quick. Done.

I remember thinking, there's more there... but I'm not getting it. You've probably felt that too: Shorter answers, more "I'm fine," and conversations that stay on the surface.

Or maybe it shows up differently. Big reactions, quick frustration, emotions that seem to come out of nowhere. Different expressions. Same root. Your child is trying to process something, but doesn't always feel safe enough to bring it out. Kids don't open up where they feel corrected. They open up where they feel safe. Where they can bring what's really going on without having to filter it first.

When safety is missing, you'll see it. Your child begins holding things back. Conversations stay on the surface. They avoid certain topics or give answers that reveal very little. Not because they're trying to hide, but because they're trying to protect themselves.

*Will I get in trouble?*

*Will I be misunderstood?*

*Will this turn into a lecture?*

They begin editing what they share.

## NUMBER ONE: SAFETY

Eventually, distance forms. But when safety is steady, your child knows they can bring hard things into the room without fear of being shut down, rushed, or immediately corrected.

Most parents don't mean to create distance. We care deeply. We want to help. But sometimes, in our effort to help, we move too quickly. We correct before we understand. We explain before we listen. We try to fix before we fully hear what's underneath. I've done that more times than I can count. One of my kids would bring something to me, and before they even finished talking, I already had a response ready: guidance, perspective, and a solution.

What I didn't realize was that they needed something first. To feel *understood*. When a child feels corrected before they feel understood, they start holding things back. Safety doesn't come from having the perfect response. It comes from how you respond first.

### **WHY SAFETY MATTERS**

Researchers often use the phrase secure attachment to describe the bond that develops when a child consistently experiences safety, comfort, and connection with a trusted adult. Secure attachment is one of the strongest predictors of flourishing in emotional, relational, social, and even physical well-being.

Safety sits at the center of that process.

When a child knows they can bring their fears, mistakes, questions, and struggles to you without fear of rejection, they learn something powerful. They learn that relationships can be trusted. They learn they do not have to face difficult things alone.

Those lessons stay with them far longer than we often realize.

Before teaching.

Before correcting.

Before guiding.

There's a moment where your child is silently asking: Is it safe for me to say this here? Your response answers that question. Sometimes the most helpful thing you can do isn't fix the moment right away—it's stay in it with them a little longer.

Truth still matters. But timing matters too. When truth comes too early, it can feel like correction. When it comes after connection, it feels like support.

## **A SAFE SPACE TO SHARE**

There's something about a dinner table.

Not a perfect one.

Not a quiet one.

Just a place where your people gather for a few minutes and look at each other.

For many families, those opportunities have slowly disappeared. Schedules filled up. Phones showed up. Everyone started moving in different directions. Something important faded: a natural place where kids learn, "I can say what's really going on inside me."

A safe place to share doesn't start with a big conversation. It starts with a consistent one. What your child needs most isn't a quick solution. They need someone willing to stay present long enough to understand. When you validate before you prescribe, you communicate something powerful:

***You matter more than fixing this quickly.***

You don't need perfect questions or long conversations. You just need a rhythm.

## **Try this!**

A few nights each week, sit down together—even briefly—and ask one simple question. Here are some ideas:

- What made you smile today?
- What felt hard today?
- Did anything surprise you today?
- What's something you've been thinking about lately?

Then slow down long enough to really listen. Not to correct. Not to teach. Just to understand.

Simple rhythms like this build trust. Eventually, your child begins to realize: This is a safe place for me to be known.



NUMBER TWO

# Identity

TO KNOW WHO THEY REALLY ARE



# Identity

## TO KNOW WHO THEY REALLY ARE

When identity feels shaky, everything else does too. When identity gets tied to performance, comparison, or approval, your kids start carrying weight they were never meant to carry. When a child doesn't know who they are, they start looking for something else to tell them.

Performance. Approval. Comparison.

*If I do well, I'm okay.*

*If they like me, I'm okay.*

*If I measure up, I'm okay.*

But those things shift constantly. When identity is built on something unstable, your child feels it. Instead of standing on something solid, they begin carrying pressure they were never meant to carry.

You'll usually see it in small ways first:

- Constant comparison
- Discouragement that lingers
- Needing reassurance over and over again
- Feeling like they're either "too much" or "not enough"

As a parent, that's hard to watch. You want to fix it. You want to say the right thing at the right moment and make it settle. But identity doesn't form in one moment. It forms through what is repeated, reinforced, and spoken again and again.

## NUMBER TWO: IDENTITY

When identity is steady, it doesn't mean your child never struggles. It means their struggle doesn't define them. They can have a hard day and not lose themselves in it. They can fail and not believe they are a failure. They can feel unsure and still have something steady to come back to.

### **A SOLID IDENTITY**

There was a season in my life when my thoughts were loud. Fear had a way of showing up uninvited. Anxiety didn't ask permission. Honestly, it started shaping the way I saw everything, including myself. I knew what was true, but what I felt often spoke louder.

Maybe you've been there too, where your mind knows one thing, but your heart feels something completely different. If we don't learn how to respond to that tension, it quietly begins to lead us.

What we repeatedly say to ourselves eventually shapes what we believe. What we believe shapes how we live.

Your child is already forming those beliefs now.

So the question becomes, *What are they learning to believe about who they are?*

You don't have to wait until something is wrong to build something strong. The best time to shape identity is before the hard moments come.

That's where the Forty I Ams come in.

Years ago, a pastor friend told me, "Our faith is verbal."

They're not just statements. They are truths. Simple and steady reminders of who God says we are, spoken out loud on purpose.

Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is replace what you're feeling with what you know is true.

## WHY IDENTITY MATTERS

There is a reason this matters so much.

Research continues to show that people who live from clear values tend to experience greater confidence, stronger emotional health, and a deeper sense of satisfaction in life. Values help us make decisions. They guide us when life feels uncertain. They remind us what matters most.

When a child understands who they are, they begin to understand what matters to them.

Their values become less influenced by every opinion around them and more rooted in something steady. They become more confident—not because they have all the answers, but because they know what they stand for.

Identity and values work together. The stronger a child's sense of identity becomes, the easier it is for them to make decisions that align with who they are becoming

## Try this!

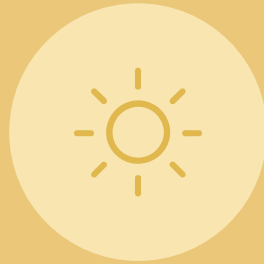
Start small. Choose one *Forty I Am* statement from the options below and say it together as a family out loud:

- I am stronger than I feel right now.
- I am a child of God.
- I am giving my worries to Jesus.

It may feel unfamiliar at first. That's okay. Keep going. Say it in the car. At bedtime. Before school. Let your kids hear it repeated consistently. Over time, those words begin to take root.

One day, without prompting, you'll hear your child say it on their own—in a hard moment or a quiet one. That's when you'll realize something steady is being built inside them.

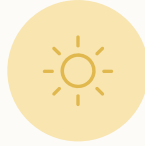
You're not just giving your child something to say. You're helping them understand who they are. That foundation stays with them longer than you think.



NUMBER THREE

# Gratitude

TO SEE WHAT'S ALREADY GOOD



# Gratitude

## TO SEE WHAT'S ALREADY GOOD

There was a season when I started noticing something in my kids that caught me off guard.

They had more than I did growing up. More opportunities. More experiences. More access to just about everything. Still, it never seemed to last very long. We'd do something fun together, something I thought they'd really enjoy. They would... for a moment. Then almost immediately:

"What are we doing next?"

"Can we get this?"

"Can we do that?"

I remember thinking, *how is it possible to have so much and still feel like it's not enough?* When I paid closer attention, I realized it wasn't just them. It was everywhere. A constant pull toward more.

More experiences. More attention. More approval. More of whatever comes next.

Underneath it all is a quiet message: **What you have right now isn't enough.**

Our kids don't choose to believe that. They absorb it. That mindset creates pressure by always looking ahead, always reaching for what's next, and rarely settling into what's already right in front of them. Honestly, we feel that too. It's easy to look at all of this and think: They just need to be more grateful. But gratitude doesn't grow from pressure. It grows from perspective.

You can tell a child to "say thank you," but if they quietly believe there's always something better out there, something they're missing, gratitude never fully takes root. Underneath the behavior is a belief: What I have right now isn't enough. That belief creates pressure.

## NUMBER THREE: GRATITUDE

Always reaching.  
Always comparing.  
Always looking for what's next.

I've felt that in my own life too. Times where I was already holding something good, but my mind was somewhere else, focused on what was missing instead of what was already present. This isn't just a kid issue. It's a human one. Gratitude grounds us in what is already true, already present, already good.

That kind of perspective changes things. It slows the pace. It steadies emotions. It creates space to actually enjoy what's already in front of you. But it doesn't happen automatically. It has to be practiced. We had to make a shift in our home. Instead of immediately moving to the next thing, we started pausing long enough to notice what was already good.

"That was fun."  
"I'm thankful we got to do that."  
"That was a really good moment."

At first, it felt simple. Maybe even insignificant. Something started to shift. What you notice consistently, you begin to value. What you value, you begin to enjoy. Gratitude takes root as a rhythm. Gratitude grows more easily when it's connected to truth:

I am cared for.  
I have what I need.  
God is providing for me.

An attitude of gratitude doesn't ignore what's hard. It just refuses to let hard things become the only thing we see. That perspective can change the atmosphere of a home. It slows the pace. It lowers pressure. It creates space to actually enjoy what's already here. That kind of joy doesn't depend on what comes next.

### **WHY GRATITUDE MATTERS**

Across cultures, generations, and faith traditions, gratitude continues to show up as one of the most consistent practices connected to well-being. Few ideas are as universally embraced or as consistently supported.

The challenge is that most people agree gratitude is important but rarely practice it intentionally.

## NUMBER THREE: GRATITUDE

Gratitude changes what we notice. Instead of focusing only on what is missing, it helps us recognize what is already present. It trains our minds to see goodness, provision, and moments worth celebrating.

That simple shift can have a significant impact over time—not because life becomes easier, but because we learn to see more clearly what is already good.

It's easy to focus on what's missing. What didn't go right. What we wish was different. Our kids feel that too. Gratitude doesn't ignore what's hard. It just helps us remember that hard things aren't the only things that are true. Gratitude grows best when it becomes part of the rhythm of a home.

### **Try this!**

Put a piece of paper on the fridge and write: "Today, we're grateful for..."

Invite everyone to add one thing each day.

Keep it simple:

- A good meal
- A friend
- Time outside
- Something that made them smile

Don't overthink it. Just let it become part of the rhythm of your family. You're training your child's heart to notice what is already good. That changes the way they experience life.



NUMBER FOUR

# Resilience

TO KNOW THEY CAN DO HARD THINGS



# Resilience

## TO KNOW THEY CAN DO HARD THINGS

There's a moment every parent faces. Your child is hurting. Something didn't go the way they hoped. A friendship changed. They failed at something that mattered to them. Or maybe it's something smaller, but to them, it doesn't feel small.

Everything in you wants to do one thing: fix it.

Make it better. Make the hurt go away. Help them not feel it so deeply.

That instinct comes from love. But removing every hard moment doesn't prepare a child for life. It keeps them from building something they're going to need: Resilience. Resilience isn't built when life is easy. It's built when life is hard and your child learns: I can stand in this. I remember a moment when one of my kids was deeply discouraged after something didn't work out the way they hoped.

I knew exactly what I wanted to do – Step in. Soften it. Fix it.

But I also knew something else. If I rushed in too quickly, I might take away something important they needed the chance to build. So instead of immediately solving it, I stayed.

I listened.

I sat with them in it.

I let the moment be hard for a little while.

That's uncomfortable for parents. When your child hurts, you feel it too. But something important happens when a child realizes: **This is hard, but I'm not alone.** Resilience begins to grow.

## NUMBER FOUR: RESILIENCE

Not: Life is hard, figure it out.

**But: Life is hard, and I can face it.**

When resilience is missing, you'll usually see it quickly. Your child becomes overwhelmed easily. They avoid what feels uncomfortable or immediately look to someone else to remove the difficulty. Not because they're weak, but because they haven't yet learned they can stand in hard things. When every hard moment is removed, they never get the chance to discover that they can. Resilience grows through experience.

Not through pressure.

Not through harshness.

But through staying in something long enough to realize: I can do this.

Your child doesn't need to face hard things alone. They just need someone willing to stay with them without immediately removing the struggle. That's what helps the shift happen. Instead of thinking: *I have to get out of this*, they begin to believe: *I can move through this*.

What you say matters here. In hard moments, your child's thoughts tend to follow their feelings. If those thoughts go unchecked, they begin shaping what your child believes. You step in. You're not arguing with their feelings, you're reminding them of the truth.

### **WHY RESILIENCE MATTERS**

Sometimes resilience is described as distress tolerance—the ability to stay present when life feels uncomfortable, uncertain, disappointing, or painful.

That skill matters because life will always include things we cannot control.

At the core of many struggles is an inability to tolerate distress. Anxiety often grows when we cannot sit with uncertainty. Depression can deepen when painful emotions feel overwhelming or impossible to carry.

The goal is not to remove every difficult feeling. The goal is to help our children learn that difficult feelings can be experienced without being defeated by them.

Resilience teaches a child: **This is hard, but I can get through it.**

Some of the most meaningful conversations with your child won't be planned. They'll happen in the car. At bedtime. Your child is carrying things they don't always know how to say out loud. Often, what they need most is someone willing to step into those moments with them.

## Try this!

Ask your child: "Is there anything about tomorrow that feels hard right now?"

Let them answer.

Don't rush.

Don't fix it immediately.

Just listen.

Then say: "I'd love to pray for you about that."

Keep the prayer simple. Keep it specific.

Later, circle back and ask: "How did that go?"

*Remind them: The win isn't that they handled it perfectly. The win is that they showed up and faced it. That's how resilience begins to grow.*



NUMBER FIVE

# Purpose

A LIFE BIGGER THAN JUST THEM



# Purpose

## A LIFE BIGGER THAN JUST THEM

When everything becomes about us, life gets heavier.

Our problems feel bigger. Our emotions feel louder. Our world gets smaller.

Our kids are growing up in a world that constantly reinforces that mindset:

- Focus on yourself
- Protect your happiness
- Get what you need
- Make life about you

Some of that sounds healthy. But when everything revolves around the self, it creates pressure. Because suddenly your happiness, your success, and your experience become the center of everything. That's a heavy thing for a child to carry.

I remember a season when this became clear to me. We were giving our kids good opportunities. Activities. Experiences. Things we thought would help them thrive. But I started noticing more frustration than I expected when things didn't go their way.

I realized something. Without meaning to, so much of their world had quietly become centered around themselves: what they were doing, what they were getting, and what they were experiencing.

That kind of pressure becomes exhausting. Then one day, we had an opportunity to help someone in a simple way. Nothing dramatic. Just showing up for someone else.

I noticed something different in my child. Their focus moved beyond themselves. They started asking questions, paying attention differently, and engaging more deeply. Afterward, they felt lighter.

Their circumstances hadn't changed. But their focus had. That's the power of purpose.

### **WHY PURPOSE MATTERS**

Purpose does more than give direction. It provides protection.

Research consistently shows that people with a strong sense of purpose experience greater well-being, stronger resilience, and improved emotional health. Purpose influences how we respond to challenges and can lessen the emotional and physical impact of stress.

When children understand that their lives matter and that they have something meaningful to contribute, setbacks feel different. Hard moments still hurt, but they no longer define everything.

Purpose gives a child a reason to keep moving forward. It reminds them that their life is connected to something bigger than the challenge standing in front of them. One of the most helpful things for a child's emotional health is learning to look beyond themselves. Their needs still matter. Their feelings still matter. But their life is part of something bigger. That shift changes things. It doesn't remove their struggles, but it gives those struggles perspective. It creates space. Space lowers pressure.

When purpose is missing, everything starts to feel intensely personal. Small disappointments feel bigger than they are. Frustration grows quickly. The world narrows. But when purpose begins to grow, your child starts looking beyond themselves. They notice people more. They care more deeply. They feel more connected. They become more aware that their life has meaning beyond their own experience. That's purpose.

Like everything else in this book, it's built slowly through small, repeated moments. This is where identity connects again.

When your child knows who they are, they are free to live beyond themselves.

Your child begins to realize that kindness isn't just something we do occasionally. It becomes part of how we live. They notice more. They care more deeply. They begin stepping into a life bigger than themselves.

They aren't constantly trying to prove something or secure something.  
They can give.  
They can serve.  
They can engage from a place of security. That's what makes this sustainable.

It's easy for life to turn inward. Schedules fill up. Needs feel constant. Without realizing it, the world slowly starts revolving around us. Our kids absorb that too.

An outward-focused life doesn't happen accidentally. It's formed one small moment at a time through learning to notice the people around us. When a child learns to truly see others, something important begins to grow:

**Life isn't just about *me*.**

## Try this!

On your next outing, invite your child to intentionally notice one person.

Maybe it's thanking someone sincerely, smiling at someone who looks tired, holding the door open, or simply saying, "I appreciate you."

Keep it simple. Keep it consistent.

Look for opportunities to serve together in small ways—as a family, at church, or in your community.

That's how purpose grows.

# Conclusion

If you're honest, this can feel like a lot. You care deeply. You want to help your child well. Sometimes you're still left wondering: Where do I even start? That question matters. Most parents don't struggle with caring. They struggle with clarity knowing what actually helps them when it matters most.

This book isn't meant to add pressure. It's meant to help you see more clearly. You don't have to change everything at once. Start somewhere.

Speak truth over your child.

- Listen a little longer.
- Pause long enough to notice what's good.
- Stay with them.
- Create opportunities for them to look beyond themselves.

You don't have to do all of it perfectly. Just begin. Because consistency builds what intensity never will. Your child is shaped slowly over time when they:

- Feel safe
- Know what's true about their identity
- Learn gratitude
- Discover resilience
- Live with purpose

While none of this happens overnight, something steady is being built. God is with your child in every moment you see, and in the ones you don't. He's with you too. In the conversations. In the uncertainty. He's with you when you're trying to figure out what to say or what to do next.

So when you find yourself wondering again, What does my child need right now?

Come back to what matters most.

Start small. Stay steady.

**Because what is steady becomes strong.**

# Looking for your next step?

DISCOVER YOUR PARENT JOURNEY  
BY TAKING OUR QUICK ASSESSMENT

[CLICK HERE](#)



# About the Author

Toby Slough knows what it feels like to love your kids and still wonder if you're doing enough.

As a husband, father, pastor, and ministry leader, he has spent decades walking alongside families through some of life's most challenging moments. Along the way, he discovered that many parents are not lacking love or commitment. They simply need practical tools, steady support, and a clear path forward.

For more than 25 years, Toby has navigated his own journey with panic and anxiety while leading in ministry, raising a family, and helping others do the same. Those experiences shaped not only his personal life, but also how he cared for people, led teams, and encouraged families facing difficult seasons. They taught him the importance of healthy rhythms, strong identity, meaningful connection, and a faith that remains steady when life feels uncertain.

After serving in pastoral leadership for more than two decades, Toby and his wife, Mika, founded Goby Ministries in 2022. Their heart is to help families pursue emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness through practical resources, biblical truth, and a supportive community. Through books, courses, coaching, events, and everyday encouragement, Goby equips parents, pastors, and families with tools to navigate life's challenges with hope and confidence.

Today, Toby continues to speak, write, coach, and encourage people across the country. Together, he and Mika remain committed to helping families discover that they are not alone, that God is with them, and that hope is possible even in life's hardest seasons.

For more information or to  
get started on your journey  
today, visit online at

**[beagoby.com/gobyparents](https://beagoby.com/gobyparents)**

