

# Messages from Pope Francis

Based on  
"Hope- Pope Francis, the Autobiography"

## Part 3/3: Manage Emotions



In his autobiography, **Hope**, Pope Francis shared seven life-experiences that are relevant to tutoring the hearts of school-aged children. They are summarized in a three-part series. This Newsletter, #3, focuses on managing emotional stress. Newsletter #1 focuses on promoting Christian Character, and Newsletter #2 focuses on growing from mistakes.

**Emotions** are *temporary* feelings, internal sensations, or gut-reactions. Emotions attract us toward ideas, things, or persons that we perceive as good; or emotions turn us away from things that we perceive as bad for us.

Emotions are neither moral nor immoral; neither good nor bad. They just are! Emotions surface spontaneously. For instance, joy, sorrow, pleasure, disappointment, fear, guilt, jealousy, resentment, and anger come uninvited to our awareness. In themselves, emotions are not problematic; it is what we do with our emotions that matters. What is important is to learn how to name, claim, and tame our emotions so that they serve life-giving purposes. When we do not control an emotion, it controls us!

**Emotional Skills** are teachable and chosen, like sharing, honesty, empathy, compassion, self-control, appreciation, sensitivity, sympathy, and sorrow. Acquiring such skills leads to forming life-giving relationships. Growth in those virtues lessens negative tendencies. Some children require professional counseling to guide the process.

Virtue formation does not rely on happenstance. Emotional skills are both taught and caught through purposeful and casual exposure to virtues: **purposeful** (planned, deliberate, persistent exposure and repetitive practice over time) and **casual** (observation of life experiences and demonstration by adults who model them with consistency, intention, perseverance, and emotional responsiveness).

**Emotional skills are distinctly different from emotions.**

**Skills are rational and intellectual choices of the will.**

**Emotions are spontaneous outbreaks of feelings and physiological responses.**

## MANAGING FAILURE

*"There is always a hidden wisdom in failure. . . . Wisdom belongs to those who get up again, to those who move forward. It belongs to those who don't spend their time complaining but get back into the game. It belongs to those whose hearts don't harden with resentment and selfishness but who embrace life. Always."* (HOPE, pp 92-93)

- Frequently recite the mantra, "We are winners; not whiners."
- Apply a proactive response ("**PAST**") to failure, disappointment, and hurts. (1) **PRAY** to forgive self and/or others involved. (2) **ACKNOWLEDGE** where and why things "went south." (3) **SUGGEST** what advice would you offer to someone else in this predicament? (4) **TEACHABLE MOMENT**: Let it go! Let it be a learning experience.
- Recall Doctor Suesse wisdom:  
"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose."  
"Sometimes you never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory."
- Commit to memory the following poems. Teach their life-messages to your children:

### KEEP MOVING FORWARD

Ben Burrows

Keep moving forward, however fast or slow.  
The road ahead is rocky and you have far to go.  
Let every setback be a step toward your chosen goal.  
Remember faith to try again will pay the highest toll.  
Pause only to refresh yourself; don't contemplate defeat.  
Those who have the fortitude will find the challenge sweet.  
True success is never found in a single day  
Hard work for a long time is the only way.

"Slow but sure," the turtle says  
Through the flood and storm  
Every day presents a test  
And you must show good form.  
Heed what I have told you  
And time will tell I'm sure  
That win or lose you're someone  
With the power to endure.

### DON'T QUIT

John Greenleaf Whittier

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest, if you must, but don't you quit.  
  
Life is odd with its twists and turns,  
As everyone of us sometimes learns,  
And many a failure turns about  
When we might have won had we stuck it out.  
Don't give up though the pace seems slow –  
You may succeed with another "go."  
  
Success is failure turned inside out –  
The silver tint in the clouds of doubt,  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems so far;  
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit –  
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

## THERAPY DURING A TIME OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

*"There were emotional situations that were extremely hard to cope with. For nearly a year I was given a hand by a psychiatrist, a very wise and capable Jewish woman ... I went to her once a week, and her suggestions were always helpful. I still remember them and find them instructive even today."* (HOPE, p. 125)

If the ideas expressed in this newsletter are insufficient to calm a child's emotional distress, seek professional counselling. Therapists are confidential, objective, and trained to ask the "right" questions. Therapy offers new perspectives and tailors coping skills to the client.