

Dealing With Disappointment

What exactly is disappointment? Disappointment is an emotion that can be quite complex. It often is made up of frustration, anger and sadness brought on because something did not happen the way one had hoped and/or expected it to happen.

For example, you did not get accepted into the college you wanted to attend; your basketball team lost a big game that you just knew you were going to win; you didn't get chosen for a lead role in a play; or you failed your driver's test. The list goes on and on.

The fact is, there will be times when an adolescent/teen or any kid for that matter, feels let down and/or has moments of disappointment. No matter the reason, below are some tips for helping kids and adolescents/teens handle and learn from disappointment.

TIP #1:

It should first be understood that just like other emotions, disappointment is a normal feeling that we all experience in life and it is rather inevitable.

One helpful way of handling disappointment is showing and/or reminding kids that it is simply a part of life. After all, disappointment is a feeling that comes up when expectations we have aren't met. Accepting and recognizing that disappointing things will occur can make things less lasting and help adolescents/teens move forward, even while feeling disappointed.

Of course, that does not mean we tell adolescents/teens to just get over it as this often minimizes and invalidates their feelings.

TIP #2:

When an adolescent/teen is disappointed, let them come to you first. They may need to cry, vent and/or get their frustrations out. As long as they are not being inappropriate to you or others, just listen and let them get their feelings and thoughts out. Allow them to speak first about what happened and allow them to be disappointed. Rushing in to make them feel better, while understandable, generally holds them back in learning how to deal effectively with disappointment.

TIP #3:

We should not blame teachers for a low grade, or a coach or a referee for the team losing a game. Even in some rare instances where that might be part of the reason, it is quite counter-productive. We need to allow them to fully experience disappointment when it happens, acknowledge it and help them learn

and grow from it. Blame doesn't allow for growth and cultivate personal accountability.

TIP #4:

After you have listened to everything they had to say about the situation, you can start asking questions about what happened and why they think it happened. You might even offer up some unbiased observations or facts. For example, if they did poorly on a test, you can ask them if they felt like they were prepared for the test or did they feel like they needed more time to learn the material. You can share some observations and/or facts that you noticed, such as, you know they were very busy the week of the test with before and after school commitments.

You can take it a step further and share a time where you did poorly on a test and you blamed the teacher or you felt like you were never going to understand the material and that you thought you were going to fail the class, even though it was just one test.

TIP #5:

So, how do you help them overcome the feeling of disappointment? One of the best ways to deal with disappointment is to help them come up with a plan for success. In the above scenario, this may be planning to set aside more time for studying the week of tests. This may mean they have to limit some of their after-school activities to prepare for the test. Another idea may be to make sure to ask the teacher or their parents for help with the subjects they don't understand.

As we know, helping someone work through disappointment is not often as simple and black and white as this article makes it sound and sometimes disappointment can lead to something bigger. In fact, sometimes disappointments can lead to depression.

Depression causes prolonged feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities and sometimes relationships. Many young people who struggle with depression turn to alcohol and/or other drugs to cope. Untreated depression is the #1 cause of suicide. If you suspect your child might be struggling with depression, seek professional mental health help.

For more information on depression, please visit our website below for a list of resources on depression as well as other mental health conditions and resources. <https://scipnebraska.com/resources/resources/mental-health.html>

For more information on disappointment, visit:

<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-your-kids-handle-disappointment/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-power-prime/201106/parenting-disappointment-is-good>

<https://parentingteensandtweens.com/helping-teens-cope-with-disappointment/>