



## A Lesson in Losing

by Meghan Holohan      TODAY.com

Losing is no fun. And it is tough watching your child lose at something he really wants to win. But teaching your children to handle loss with grace can help them become resilient adults.

It's understandable to be upset after a loss, especially when coming so close, but more important than winning is accepting the loss, experts say. "When we have the opportunity to succeed and there is a lot riding on our performance, it is disappointing [when we lose]. The important point is to think about what we are going to do differently the next time around," explains Sian Beilock, professor of psychology at the University of Chicago and author of the book *"Choke: What the Secrets of the Brain Reveal About Getting it Right When You Have To."*

Her research indicates that when people focus on the negatives, they are more likely to make mistakes during the next performance. And the pessimistic emotions use up brainpower that could be devoted to being better prepared or improving. Parenting experts agree that parents can help their children lose with class, which will help them as they negotiate life.

"Feeling disappointed is absolutely natural," explains Amy McCready, TODAY Moms contributor and founder of Positive Parenting Solutions. "It's what you do with that disappointment. Do you wallow in it or move on?"

McCready recommends that parents validate their children's feelings when they don't get the "A" on the science experiment or miss the game-winning goal. But, then parents should focus on the positives.

"Whatever the situation is, focus on the effort [your child] put forth ... that is something to be proud of," she says.

Susan Newman, author and parenting expert, agrees that emphasizing the successes allows a child to cope with losing. "No matter what happens, you have succeeded beyond most kids in the entire country. So that's where you put your focus [as a parent]." And, parents can reframe how they talk to their kids to lessen the focus on winning.

"I hear parents say 'did you win or lose,'" Newman explains. "Ask the child to focus on the success along the way." Parents can help their children understand how to lose by not allowing them to only win. Take board games, for example. Many parents allow their children to go first and let them win. These kids always expect to win. This can create problems for them as children—no one wants to be friends with the kid who always has to win—and later as adults—no one wants a coworker who throws temper tantrums.

"What are we trying to foster ... that kids are victims or sometimes things happen [that we don't like]?" says McCready.

In the end, **losing is a great opportunity** because it provides a chance to develop skills that will be crucial throughout our life. And, for most of us, these skills are much more important than dribbling a basketball, acing every spelling test, or coming home with the blue ribbon all the time.