

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO HELPING YOUR KIDS DEAL WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

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Disappointment is a normal part of life, and the lockdowns due to COVID-19 caused some major disappointments while disrupting lives everywhere. Across the country, kids missed out on big events like graduations and summer vacations, as well as ordinary daily activities like hanging out with friends.

It's enough to make anyone feel a little sad and discouraged.

It's also natural for parents to want to shield children from such unpleasant situations. **However, dealing with losses can be a beneficial experience.** Otherwise, your sons and daughters may struggle when they run into bigger letdowns as adults.

How can you guide your children without taking over?

Try these ideas for helping your kids to deal with disappointment.

Talking with Your Kids about Disappointment

There are major differences between dwelling on disappointments, trying to suppress them, and dealing with them constructively. Your child will probably find it easier to move on if they can talk about their feelings.

Try these techniques to talk with your kids about their disappointments:

1. **Show empathy.** Help your child to accept their feelings. Validate their experiences even if they're different from your own. **Avoid saying anything that could sound judgmental or dismissive.**

2. **Ask questions.** Ensure that you understand what's really bothering your child. Maybe they're concerned about how this unusual senior year will affect their college prospects or maybe they're more focused on staying in touch with their friends.

3. **Offer perspective.** The pandemic is a relatively small percentage of your lifetime, but it can be more overwhelming for someone under 18. Let your kids know that at least some of the restrictions will be lifted eventually.

4. **Be honest.** At the same time, you want to avoid making unrealistic promises. **Share truthful and age-appropriate information.**

5. **Think positive.** It's also important to remind yourself and your children that there are still many things to look forward to. Try to be curious and hopeful about what the future holds in store.

Other Coping Strategies to Help Your Kids Deal with Disappointment

Skillful communication will help relieve doubts and fears. Then, you can work with your child on how to take concrete action.

Use these strategies:

1. **Present choices.** Lack of control plays a big role in the distress that many children and adults feel today. **Help your child to develop their own daily routines** and shift their attention toward activities that can boost their self-esteem.

2. **Create substitutes.** Be creative about coming up with replacements for the things they've lost. Host virtual birthday parties and playdates. Visit art museums and planetariums online.

3. **Reduce stress. Teach your child to soothe themselves.** Depending on their age, they might want to cuddle a stuffed toy or listen to new age music.
4. **Manage expectations.** Hardships will be easier to bear if you help your kids build self-awareness and self-knowledge. Encourage them to pursue their own goals rather than comparing themselves to others.
5. **Band together.** Another advantage of hard times is the potential they have for creating social bonds. Your child may feel closer to their classmates due to going through the same events together.
6. **Help others.** On a broader level, reaching out to others in need usually makes us feel happier. Look for ways to volunteer as a family in your community.
7. **Love unconditionally.** Disappointments can be especially uncomfortable if your child feels like they failed at something. **Reassure them that you love them** regardless of how many times they lose their backpack.
8. **Show faith.** Your child is more likely to overcome any kind of disappointment if you express confidence in them. **Tell them you believe in them and praise them for their efforts.**

Dealing with disappointments teaches children valuable lessons that will prepare them for adult life. As a parent, it's up to you to provide a loving role model while they develop their coping skills.