

HOW TO DEAL WITH DISAPPOINTMENT

When things don't turn out the way you hoped, it may seem like the end of the world. Here are some things you can do to keep disappointment from getting you down.

-  Stop. Calm Down. Give yourself some time. Things might not seem nearly so bad tomorrow.
-  Get your feelings out in a way that doesn't hurt you or anybody else.
-  Talk about it with your parents or a good friend.
-  Ask yourself if this is really worth getting angry or upset about.
-  Think about what you can learn from the experience and how you can do better next time.
-  Don't judge yourself. Failing at something does not mean that you are a failure.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about a time when something didn't go well even though you tried very hard. How did you deal with it?
2. What do you do when you get really frustrated or mad at yourself?
3. When things seem to be going wrong, what can you do to make yourself feel better?
4. Have you ever felt the same way? How did you handle it?
5. Do you think you were taking things too seriously? How can you tell if you are taking something too seriously?
6. If something important doesn't turn out the way you had hoped, what are some helpful ways to deal with your disappointment? What are some harmful ways?
7. How can you keep from getting angry and upset when things go wrong?
8. Are there times when quitting something difficult is the right thing to do?
9. What can happen if you always want everything to be perfect?
10. Is losing the same thing as being a loser? Is failing the same thing as being a failure?
11. What can you say or do to help a friend get over a disappointment?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Ask the children to suggest various ways to deal with disappointment. List them on the board. When they've run out of ideas, compare the list with the one at the top of this column (see "How To Deal With Disappointment"). Discuss each idea and ask the kids to give examples.
2. On slips of paper have the class write examples of times when kids their age might feel disappointed or feel like a failure. Have them pick one slip at a time from a hat, read it aloud, and offer suggestions for how to deal with it.
3. Fill a glass halfway with a colored liquid. Ask the students to say whether it's half-empty or half-full. Quickly they'll conclude it could be either one. Explain that how you see things, your point of view, is called your "perspective." Your perspective on this glass can be compared to your perspective on almost anything. Another word similar to perspective is "attitude." The glass can be either half-empty (negative attitude) or half-full (positive attitude). Ask for examples of how our perspective and attitude can influence the way we see many things in our lives.
4. Have the class brainstorm common obstacles (or "blockers") kids their age might encounter in trying to achieve goals in school, in sports, and so on. Examples: getting "B"s in spelling but not getting "A"s no matter how hard you try; not doing well in a sport because you're a lot smaller than the other kids. For each obstacle have the students suggest ways to overcome it. Emphasize that a key to overcoming obstacles and dealing with difficulty is your attitude (perspective). If you're confident and believe you can do something, that's half the battle.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Think of different times when you felt disappointed or upset with yourself. For each one write about what you did - or could have done - to feel better. How could a positive attitude have made a difference?
2. Write a letter to someone you know who is feeling disappointed. Explain how it can help to look at things from a more positive perspective. After delivering the letter, get together with the person to talk about it.
3. Group writing assignment: In groups of three, have one person write a sentence or two about a time when a person was disappointed or upset. The paper passes to the next person, who writes a sentence or two from a negative perspective - it seemed like the end of the world. The paper passes to the third person, who writes a sentence or two from a positive perspective - it wasn't really so bad and something good came out of it. Give everyone a chance to write the three parts. Take time to discuss what you've written.
4. Write a short story about someone who tried to do something difficult and stuck with it until he or she succeeded. Include some ideas about why the person's attitude toward the problem was important in overcoming it.