

Dealing with Your Disappointment When Your Child Doesn't Perform His Best

Don't Let Your Own Emotions Spoil the Experience for Your Child -- or for You

By [Heidi Coghlan](#)

Sometimes your kids don't give their all when they participate in a club or on a team. Hey, they're kids. But when you're expecting more, you may find yourself struggling with disappointment or other emotions. Here are some tips I've "discovered" as I've worked through it myself -- along with some personal experience regarding my daughter's gymnastics state meet.

1. **Acknowledge the emotions.** You may not immediately recognize what you're feeling beyond unpleasantness and that's OK. Sort through them, figure out what you're feeling and why. Realize that it's OK to feel whatever you're feeling. Then decide what you want to do about it.

It took me a while to figure out just what I was feeling. Yes, I was disappointed. I also was afraid my daughter would feel bad. But worst of all, I discovered I was embarrassed and afraid of what other team parents might be thinking about her performance. Then I was ashamed for feeling that way!

2. **Don't take it out on your child.** I've seen plenty of parents yelling at kids for blowing a play or not getting 1st place. Don't. It serves no purpose.
3. **Realize kids will be kids.** Kids, particularly younger ones, don't always take everything as seriously as adults do. They're kids, and that's OK, but it also means some days they may not try as hard as other days. You may want to figure out why your child didn't go all out and what, if anything, you wish to do about it.
4. **Look for the good in the situation.** Nothing is all bad though sometimes it's harder to find the good than others. But find it. Did your child learn something? Have fun? Make a friend?

While my daughter didn't do well on 3 of the 4 events, she did take a first in bars. I reminded myself of this several times

5. **Figure out what your child wants to get out of it.** You may be looking at the long run - college scholarships, pro contracts -- but your child probably isn't looking beyond this one event, or at most, this one season. Did she meet her own goals?

This one is hard for me because my daughter doesn't share herself well. I do know,

however, that bars is her favorite and I suspect the win on bars was enough for her and she met her own goals there.

6. **Redefine success.** 1st place isn't the only way to define success for your child. Learn to look at it from another point of view.
7. **Give it time.** They say time heals all wounds. Maybe. At the very least, it helps change our perspective. After a bit you'll likely wonder why you were so disappointed to begin with. It will be easier to focus on the positive and see the success that was there all along.

Time really worked for me. A few days and I'm seeing her success -- yes, the medal she did win, but also the path that got her here. And her own determination to keep going. I am extremely proud of my daughter, her determination and her spirit. She will get what she wants to out of her gymnastics experience and really, that's what counts.

Parenting is emotional and childhood is short. Don't let uncomfortable feelings get in the way of enjoying your child's participation in his club, sport or organization. Work them out and let your child be himself. You'll both be better off for it.