

## Study Guide #10

# Dealing with Disappointment

*Parent & Child Study Guides to Watching a Sports Event*

*Association for the Advancement  
of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP)*

Watching a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. Within the sporting arena we see both good and poor examples of such topics as: setting and working towards goals, focusing attention, managing emotions, handling disappointment, relating to others, dealing with nervousness, etc.

In order to maximize this learning opportunity, AAASP has developed a series of study guides for parents and children to use while watching a sports event, either in person or on television. Each guide is brief and focused around a limited topic. It suggests certain observations and presents several questions for the parent and child to discuss. The study guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic.

We hope that these guides will promote a healthy dialogue between parents and their children about various issues that athletes face during sporting events, as well as in preparation for competition. Your child doesn't necessarily need to be an athlete to benefit from these discussions, since children experience most of these issues in daily life, such as in school. We hope that this information is helpful to you in promoting healthy ideas about sport, exercise, and human performance in general.

### **Discussion questions: Dealing with Disappointment**

1. Find an athlete who might be disappointed with how they performed in a sports event.
2. What did they say or do to let you know that they were disappointed?
3. What did you like or not like about how they showed their disappointment?
4. Have you ever been disappointed in your own performance? In sport? Music? School?
5. What did that feel like to you, and how did you get over it?
6. Often, athletes want to win every competition in which they participate. Is it realistic to expect to win every time? Would you have fun if you knew that you would "magically win" every time, even if you didn't try?
7. What if you lost to someone and you performed very well, but they performed better that day? Can you still feel good about how you played, even if you are disappointed?
8. Do you feel like you have to perform PERFECTLY every time you compete? Is it possible to be perfect? Do you think you need to be perfect to be good at something?
9. How might you feel if you do not perform perfectly?
10. Do you get angry at yourself when you make a mistake? Why? What can you do instead of being mad?

## **Lesson conclusion**

Successful athletes realize that disappointment is part of sport. If they won every competition, they would eventually become bored with their sport and quit. The only way to win every competition would be to compete against others who were not as good as they are. Sometimes athletes perform well, but their opponent might seem to have an edge that day, and beat them. It is easy to be gracious when you win, but it is more difficult to accept defeat. Good sports will always tell their opponent “good game.”

Successful athletes pursue excellence, not perfection. While they want to win, they realize that they won’t always win. They learn to evaluate how well they played, win or lose. For example, watch an athlete who scores a career-high or hits a homerun, but does not get a victory. He may still be very excited, yet disappointed the team did not win. These athletes respect their sport, the other participants, and those around them. When they are disappointed, they do not allow that emotion to ruin their experience, or other participants’ sport experience. They learn to cope with adversity and loss, as well as with success. Successful athletes use disappointment to motivate them to practice so they do better in the future.

AAASP encourages parents to do their part in creating a supportive youth sport environment so their child will develop a life long interest in physical activity and playing sports. By teaching the fundamentals, you can help your child develop a winning attitude, not only in sports but also throughout his or her life.

## **About AAASP**

Founded in 1986, the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of the psychology of sport, exercise and health. AAASP is the premier international, multidisciplinary sport and exercise psychology organization, and is the only professional organization in North America that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport, exercise, and health psychology. For more information on this and other topics, or to find a certified sport psychology consultant in your area, visit <http://www.aaasponline.org>.

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