



School Counsellor Newsletter

Edition 47

Helping your son to manage disappointment

"Disappointments come to guide us. They lovingly whisper truths if we sit with them as our teacher."

Through my counselling network I am often forwarded links to a variety of articles and publications. One such link took me to an article by Michelle Mitchell, an award-winning speaker, educator and bestselling parenting author, who is highly regarded as a tweens and teens specialist. In this particular article, one of many from her website focusing on parenting advice, Michelle shared her tips for supporting a young person when they experience disappointment. Michelle talks about disappointment as living between our expectations and reality. For young people, disappointment can be very shocking and it is our role as adults to help them develop the skills and strategies to effectively cope with disappointment. In this newsletter I provide a summary of some of Michelle's advice. If you would like to access her materials, here is the link for this article, which is on her website: [How to help a disappointed tween or tween: Six helpful conversations.](#)

Make room for their disappointment. When your son experiences disappointment, whether it be missing out on a team or feeling let down by a friend, let them know it is okay to feel sad, angry or any other emotion. Make time to sit with them, listen to them and acknowledge their feelings without minimising them or trying to simply make them go away. Let your son have some time out if he needs it - managing the emotions that are part of being disappointed can be exhausting and draining. It is so important that your son knows his family and his home are always places of support and encouragement, no matter what feelings he may be experiencing.

Help your son to honestly reflect on his disappointment. Michelle refers to this as 'letting the truth guide us' so that we can move from the ideal to the real. Talk with your son about the 'real situation', which is acknowledging his disappointment, for example not getting a result he was hoping for. This approach is helpful rather than focussing on the 'ideal situation' where your son may be focussing on making an excuse or blaming his teacher for his result. Feeling disappointed is not easy but by helping your son to name his feelings he can tame them, let go of them and move forward in a healthy and helpful way.

Talk about what is next. Your son can be disappointed but hopeful at the same time. After you have made room for your son's disappointment and helped him to reflect, talk with your son about what he has learned from this experience. One door may have shut, such as a friendship change, but another door is also opening, such as the opportunity to make new friends. Think about what values are important to your son in a friend and reflect on how friendships can change. Help your son to think about other times he has coped with disappointment and what he learned from that experience so that he can draw on his previous experiences as one of his strengths.

I will finish this newsletter by repeating the quote from the start, one which I find to be particularly powerful and helpful:

"Disappointments come to guide us. They lovingly whisper truths if we sit with them as our teacher."



Jenelle Hooson

Jenelle is a Registered Provisional Member with NZAC (New Zealand Association of Counsellors).

If you wish to discuss the services the School Counsellor can provide, please see your son's homeroom teacher or Scott Johnson:

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