



ERIN
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of Cape Coral has a Ph.D. in education and is the mother of three children.

The agony of defeat

Failure is an important part of **growing up**

Allowing children to fail helps them grow to be healthy, well-adjusted adults. However, this is not an easy feat for many parents, including me. Most of us want only the best for our children.

As with everything in life, there are multiple answers, solutions and outcomes for every situation. If you have a child who wants to play sports but has no athletic ability, what do you do? After the third or fourth tryout with no success, should you encourage her to try her hand at a musical instrument or an academic team?

The answer is not easy, nor is it the same for every child. Watching your child put his best foot forward during a tryout only to not make the cut, is tough. Even worse are the phone calls that come later from your child's friends who actually made the cut. The "consolation talk" usually involves telling your child all that they do positive while trying to gently explain the cause or reason they didn't make the team. One fatal parenting flaw is to point out the faults of other children who did make the team. When you compare your child to others, it stimulates poor self-esteem.

Recently, I sat quietly and listened to my wonderful staff assistant, Sharon, console her daughter, Mandi, 15, after she did not make the cut for her school play. My heart wrenched as Sharon explained to her daughter that there would be other opportunities for her to be in plays. There were just no words to console her




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daughter, who had been in the school play every year for the past five years. The only thing that brought some relief to Sharon and her daughter was why she didn't make the cast: because she didn't "look the part." The play was "A Street Car Named Desire" and she needed to look somewhat like a prostitute.

As a parent, we always want the best for our children. Watching them suffer or endure heartache is never easy, yet some experts say it is a natural and necessary part of life.

"Giving kids false expectations about their abilities and skills is not only dishonest, but unethical," writes long-time school counselor and

writer Susan Carney. "Letting kids face the letdowns of childhood, however painful, is necessary for emotional growth. Kids who haven't had practice developing coping skills for disappointment fall apart later on when no one is standing there ready to rescue them."

However painful for parents, it is our job to encourage our children to be the best that they can be and to understand that life is sometimes disappointing. It's how they learn to deal with that disappointment that makes all the difference in the world. 

— You can find more from Susan Carney online at youthdevelopment.suite101.com.