



SPORT

Learn how to give your child a 'winning attitude' no matter what activity they are engaged in.

There is the old adage that it is not whether you win or not, but how you play the game that counts.

But winning feels so much better than losing does. You are the winner, the best, the king, numero uno, the victor, the triumphant one.

When you win, people pat you on the back and congratulate you. They hug you and jump up and down. They smile at you and they look so pleased and happy. They talk about your achievement and boast about it to others. They take photos of the victor and display them, email them and send them to your grandmother. There is bound to be video of the triumphant even. You get to feel like you are 9 feet tall and that you haven't a care in the world. You are convinced of your worth and you have a lot of evidence around you that shows how much everyone loves you.

It's a good feeling. It makes you feel so good about yourself. Your self-esteem and self-confidence soars. You can actually be so energized by 'winning' that you feel invincible.

But when you lose, you are not the best, not number one and not triumphant. You get patted on the back and consoled. You hate the feeling of losing and you wonder if anyone else has ever felt like such an all-over loser before.

Your self-esteem can truly suffer when you lose at something. It can feel as though you were mistaken to even get out there and try. It is almost like the fun of playing the game was not worth the risk of losing it. You want to become invisible when you lose.

And this is not really ever going to change. It will almost always be true that winning feels better than losing.

Ask yourself this:

- How can you safeguard your child so that the thought or risk of losing does not inhibit them from trying in the first place?
- How can you make sure that your child finds pleasure in other aspects of a game, besides just winning alone?
- How can you help your child learn to use defeat to spur them on to greater effort, rather than allowing it to crush them?
- How can you help your child to have empathy for others when they lose?
- How can you encourage your child to feel good about themselves when they have not yet experienced the feeling of winning, whether it be winning a game, or persisting with something till it is achieved?
- How can you turn a loss into a win for your child?
How do we help our kids to enjoy their life and not have it all depend on whether they win or lose at some games.

It may help to focus your family on 'winning attitudes'. By this I mean embed your daily conversations with comments like:

- That was a great effort.
Wow, we lost that match dismally, but I have to say I have never seen Robert play better. Did you see the way he took that ball to the end zone?
- Well there should be a prize for effort, 'cos you would sure get it!
- I know that young man is disappointed that he got out like that, but honestly, have ever seen a boy run like that?
- You guys had so much fun over that board game. It seems like you could just keep playing it, it's so much fun.
- I know you lost the game, but which part did you enjoy the most? I lost too, but I thought it was so funny when your dad got stuck in that spot and couldn't move for 3 whole turns and we all kept passing him by.
- No, I am not disappointed that your report card isn't all A's....what I was looking at is what grade you received for effort. Doing your best effort is more important to me.
- Oh, don't give up yet. Keep trying. It took me months to learn how to do that, and I was older than you are now. If you give up, you will never get it. But if you keep going, you will master it.
- We are having a special dinner tonight everyone, because our team played the best game of the season....and yes, I know they didn't win, but truly they played together better than they ever have.

And here are some ideas to help you keep a perspective about winning, in your home:

- Even in a win situation emphasize the effort that went into it.
- Emphasize and focus on the effort especially if there was a loss situation.
- Verbally recognize other people's efforts whether they are losing or winning.
- Show admiration for personal traits that are expressed or exemplified in any situation. Things like perseverance, endurance, practice, thoughtful strategizing, self-discipline. These are all characteristics of elite athletes, artists and achievers in any field. Don't miss the opportunity to point out to your children how Lance Armstrong rode for 7 hours a day for 15 years, or how a marathon runner has to discipline their mind to break through the pain and crippling exhaustion to keep on going to the end. Recognize how the man who lost his legs is still a winner because he did not let that terrible event stop him from playing basketball.
- Show your child examples of all those winning attitudes around them (so be on the lookout for them).
- Do not allow them to only look at the finish line in order to impute glory to others. Help them see what went in to the win.
- Try not show too much disappointment in yourself when you suffer a loss. Your child is watching and learning.

So make sure that you are focusing your child on all aspects of their participation and not just on the outcome. Help them value themselves for their efforts in life and their qualities that will serve them well in their life. Help them to not focus on whether they win or not at everything. Help them learn to appreciate themselves in the light of both wins and losses.

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