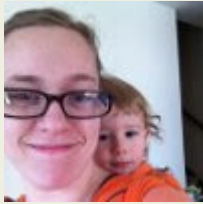


Learning A Little Disappointment



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"Balancing on My Toes" is an original column appearing every other Friday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Angel M. Ethell. Angel lives in the Chicagoland area with her family: sons Teen (13) and Lil G (2) along with their little sister Cassie Pie (dog), and her partner Daddy G. She loves learning new things along with learning that she might not always be right... 100% of the time. Archived columns can be found [here](#). BMT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Life can be rough sometimes. As adults we go through our lives and face many small disappointments throughout the day. The pop machine is out of our caffeine infusion of choice. We sigh and pick another one and move on. We get stuck in traffic and that is never fun. There are so many trials every day that thinking of them can make the head spin. In the morning the milk is gone, or my personal favorite, with just a few drops left in the container, or our mascara runs dry. These are frustrating things. Frustration is an emotion that many people are familiar with for most people are not so relaxed and 'go with the flow' types that they seldom feel its heavy weight. Children seem to feel disappointment more keenly than adults. Sometimes to the point that it seems silly to adults, but they sure do seem to be going through some things sometimes don't they? And what do they do? They cry. They sometimes throw things and throw a fit and sometimes get very worked up.

Why do They Do This? Is it to Drive Us Crazy?

Of course not, but it sure seems like it sometimes. So as an adult what do you do? A parent that uses more 'traditional' parenting methods may get angry and begin yelling. They may even begin hitting their children. I've been victim to it; it happens. This parent may even say things like "I'll give you something to cry about!" It is apparent in these methods that some parents were once children with very bad examples themselves. What is the culprit here? Lack of self control and patience and lack of a model of preferable behavior.

These children that are having troubles and that are met without compassion are truly at a disadvantage in life. Disappointment is a real feeling. Something that has to be worked through by those small minds and understood. If a child is made to repress those feelings and learns that their feelings and desires are not valid, they may have a harder time processing emotion as an adult and may even have trouble making decisions based on

personal desire and not desire to please. Desire to please is tricky. A child may learn the desire to please the adults in its life but that may lead to something innocent as indecisiveness over a dinner location or much more dangerous than that; create a person that is so trained to repress emotion and disappointment they become a victim in their relationships.

That is a Huge Jump Though

So let's focus on some alternatives to traditional parenting methods for dealing with tantrums rooted in disappointment. Staying calm is the best thing a parent can do when a small child is experiencing big emotions. This provides a model of behavior to discuss and practice so that your child can reach a calm state where some reason can be resumed. Speak gently to a child that wants that cookie. Tell her that you understand that she wants the cookie and that you think cookies are delicious too, but that lunch comes first so if she wants the cookie she must eat some lunch. Then provide a safe place for her to process those feelings and return to calm. This gives the child a sense of security. As the child grows older a parent can talk about times when they have been disappointed. This is a powerful tool to help them understand that although there is disappointment it does not have to ruin a perfectly good day. Modeling this behavior is another tool. When a parent is disappointed in a child a conversation can be started about how even though you are disappointed you still love them unconditionally. This sets them up for success later when they have children that are having big emotions that seem silly. And another powerful tool to help children deal with disappointment is empathy and validation. Communicate that their desires are appropriate and valid. "I understand you want that cookie. Cookies are delicious. Mommy wants a cookie too but she hasn't eaten her lunch yet. Now do you want to sit here with Mommy and eat so we can have cookies together?" Communication is essential for them to understand what is going on in their little brains.

Kids are Going to Face Disappointment

That is reality. Adults have more self control so we don't express it as much but adults are allowed to be disappointed and so too should children be so that they can learn that the world does not end because they are disappointed. I don't teach my son to share. Why? Because in the real world people get together and if someone refuses to let you borrow something you want you are not going to throw a fit. No, probably you should not have asked in the first place. I encourage my son to share his toys, but I teach him that it is okay to be disappointed if someone is playing with something that they do not want to share. I also teach him that if he does not feel like sharing he does not have to because it's his stuff, but that is another discussion.

My Thoughts on the Subject

I think kids should be taught to handle disappointment. I believe it will help to solve entitlement issues that have seemed to develop over the last couple decades here in America. If I model appropriate behavior and stay calm during 'I want something' tantrums then my son will learn how to act when another person, or his child is throwing a fit or at the very least understand why he just cannot have everything that he desires. I believe that setting boundaries and sticking to them is best for my family but I am also very caring and comforting during these difficult times as well. I do what I can to mitigate disappointment as much as I can and am doing the best I can with everything else that comes our way.

What are your thoughts on entitlement and teaching children to handle disappointment?

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