



Tender Hearts Child Therapy Center

Parent Newsletter

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Helping Your Child Cope with Disappointment

Another of the many jobs parents have is to help their children learn from their mistakes and positively handle disappointments. Children need to learn that mistakes are not bad. Of course, parents must differentiate between mistakes that can be used as learning opportunities and those that could be harmful or dangerous for the child in some way.

Mistakes that are learning opportunities are the result of:

- a child's creativity and experimentation, or
- conditions beyond the child's control, or
- a child's lack of knowledge.

Children need to learn that making mistakes is a part of life. When children make mistakes, parents can help them learn to cope with the disappointment by following these strategies.

- Laugh when we make an acceptable mistake.
- Provide enough materials and supplies so that children always feel that they can start over if they make a mistake (in the case of a project, etc.)
- React calmly when honest mistakes happen. For example, "Oh, well. It didn't turn out as you hoped. We'll try again next time."
- Help your children learn from their mistakes. Help them find a solution to the problem or avoid the problem in the future. Ask your children, "What went wrong? What could you have done differently?" This kind of questioning encourages problem-solving and critical thinking skills in your child and can be initiated early on in the child's life.
- Encourage your children to turn their mistakes into successes. For example, the costume for a school play that didn't turn out right can still be used for dress-up playing at home.

Around the age of 8 or 9, children develop the mental ability to evaluate their creations against a standard. For some children, this is a point at which they become very critical of their mistakes. Children growing up in homes where parents have very high expectations for their children's performance often feel that they can never make any mistakes in order for Mom and Dad to love them. While parents would not agree, it is still a very true belief to the child. Having high expectations of your children is fine—just focus more on your children's efforts rather than the outcome. In turn, this will encourage your child to try new things and master new skills. When children have less fear of failing, they are more interested in trying new adventures in which they can succeed!