

# HELP FOR PARENTS

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# Help your child cope with failure



Bob Kisiki

Ultimately, not everybody gets the trophy. Yes, you will say, "but why should it be my child to fail (to get the trophy)", but truth is, a lot of the time what we get from our efforts are not donations, but rewards... what we have worked for. Marks are awarded, not given. Of course sometimes there are extenuating circumstances, but not always. So, as we face this harvest season; the time when you collect your child from school and see what they have harvested from an entire year in whichever class, it is important for the two of you - parent and child - to understand the dynamics of failure.

Failure hurts. That is impossible to contest. Whether it is failure at



Encourage your child not to give up on learning even when they fail

a sports contest; in your financial pursuits; to get the partner you had your sights on, at war/the polls or in academics, failure is not what we set out to get. It frustrates the very best among us, and has been the reason for many to throw in the towel and hang their heads in unwarranted shame. This, however, need not be the case for your child. So, how do you help them cope with failure?

Too much pressure is put on children to excel in their academics, especially in these times when academic grades are everything. The school and the parent all vest their

(own) hopes in the child; believing that what the child gets in her exams will, in the case of the school, hoist their flag higher and, in the case of the parent, enhance the family honour. Deliver them from shame on the WhatsApp group. Many children are, therefore, helped throughout the term, coached and have their homework done by an adult, that when exam time comes, they do not realise the grades they have been getting.

So, if the child has failed to hit the expected mark, you need to help them realise that this failure is not a point

of condemnation, but a step towards realising their dream. They should look at what they did wrong and learn from it. Advise your child to dig deep and fetch out their resilience, and rebound from the failure to get the expected result. This is by no means the end.

Let your child know that everybody fails. Unfortunately, many adults fear to admit failure to their charges, but the best way to show the child that we all fail is when you describe to them an incident when you failed. You are their hero and if they know that superman/woman daddy or mummy once failed,

but got up and is now the hero/heroine s/he is, they will cope well with the failure.

Besides, not everybody has the same strengths. Do you know that sometimes failure at one thing could be the key that opens the door to your realisation of what you should actually focus on? My former classmate who got AFFF in four principal subjects at A'level realised that his strength was not in academic pursuit, and started up in artistic creation.

Right now he is, as we say, "making new and old money". Not from being an accountant or a lecturer or pilot - those things academic giants become, but from utilising his fine art prowess. Ask yourself (and your child) how many academic degrees Didier Drogba (former Chelsea striker) and Neymar Jr (Brazilian footballer); or how far in academic pursuit Beyonce Knowles and 50 Cent went.

Children who cannot handle failure are vulnerable to anxiety. Sometimes the failure is indeed a result of their having been so anxious before and during exams, that they failed to focus on the task at hand and concentrated on not failing.

Bob Kisiki is an educationist and youth worker