



Help Your Child Learn to Be a Good Loser



Everybody wants to win! But no one wins all the time, so how can you help your child be a good loser?

Practice losing. No, you can't win every time. As tempting as it is (and much easier than soothing a crying child who lost the game), letting your child win every time just sets him up with an unrealistic expectation that he can win every time. Losing teaches them valuable lessons (character building, perseverance, skill building) that will help in other areas of life. Letting them fudge on the rules (i.e., cheat) is not a good idea either. Playing by the rules keeps everyone happier in the end.

Change your focus from winning to enjoying the game. (Kids are sometimes better at this than parents. They are playing in the dirt in the outfield while the parents are yelling at him to catch the ball!) If all we emphasize is winning, how does a child who is not that good at a sport or activity feel? No, everyone doesn't deserve a trophy, but winning isn't everything. Instead ask, "Did you enjoy the game?" or "Did you make new friends?"

Teach your children what to do when they lose. Some kids are more competitive than others and losing is more difficult for some. What can you do instead of throwing the bat or throwing the game pieces all over the room? Can you count to ten or can you take a few deep breaths or whatever works? Stay calm yourself and help your child calm down.

Praise empathy and effort. At a time when everyone is calm, talk about how it feels to lose and how it feels when the other person or team is bragging or trash-talking. A good loser may feel upset inside, but still chooses to be respectful and kind to others. Praise her when you see her congratulate the other team member who won. Praise his effort even though he lost (*I saw how hard you tried and that makes me proud of you*). The Bible says we should treat people as we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12).

As with everything else in life, **be a good role model.** Little ones are watching as you scream at the coach or referee or trash-talk the other team. Statements like, "I'm really sad that our team lost, but it's just a game and we'll feel better tomorrow" can show them how to deal with losing.

