



Helping Children to Cope

As adults we have the responsibility to help children grow and develop into competent, caring adults. Here are a few things adults need to consider as we work with 4-H members throughout the year.

- help children to look at competition as an opportunity to fulfill personal goals, an occasion for excitement and enjoyment.
- Let children know that it is okay to fail, and that s/he can grow from failure. Never force a child to shoulder the burden of your own perfectionism.
- Keep competition fun. Children should be able to relax and enjoy competition, they will be able to concentrate on what they are doing. When they win or lose, help them to accept a win or loss with grace, a smile, a pleasant manner.
- All young people, who are developmentally ready, can benefit from competition, but, not all children belong in the same types of competition. Help young people explore the competitive activities they like – not just the ones you enjoy.
- Make sure children are prepared for competition. It is only fair that they should have had as much experience and be at the same general level of development as those they are competing against.
- Encourage children to accept failure without shame or embarrassment. Emphasize that the prospect of winning is only one reason to participate in an activity, and that nobody wins all the time. “Wining is not as important as how you play the game.”
- When children win, encourage them to be big-hearted. Teach them that a winner does not need to brag or hurt the feelings of the loser – that the warm glow of satisfaction is the best reward.
- Help young people to recognize, understand and accept their strengths and weaknesses. Suggest challenging yet reasonable goals and reassess them as competitive situations arise.

Source: “Teaching Your child How to Compete”, Barbara Smalley, Better Homes and Gardens, April 1985 – Adapted for use during the 1999 4-H Judges’ Training, University of Nebraska - Lincoln Extension.

