

Dealing with Losing

What to Know

Every person or team who plays games - no matter how good they are - will sometimes lose.

If you were to always win it wouldn't be fun for those playing with you. Nobody would ever want to play with you! Winning is fun, and it can make you feel happy, proud, or special. Unfortunately, in competitive games or sports only one person or one team can be the winner.

When you play games or participate on a sports team there will be times when you win and times when you lose. Losing isn't fun but you can still feel good if you try your best, follow the rules, and accept losing with courage and good sportsmanship. This means congratulating the winner and not blaming or being mad at yourself or your teammates for making mistakes.

It's important to learn how to deal with losing (and winning) to keep your friends and reduce your frustration when you lose. So, what can you do?

Prepare yourself. Sometimes you win, and sometimes your friends win. It's okay when your friends win because games are just for fun.

Redefine winning. Even though it's fun to win, what matters most is sportsmanship, playing by the rules, and being a good friend. You can feel better when you lose if you played the game well and had fun.

Learn to win gracefully. Practice phrases to use when you win. You might say, "Good game! It was so fun to play together!" Remember how your words make others feel. For example, your friend might feel sad if you say, "Ha! I won, and you lost!"

Learn to lose gracefully. Practice what to say when you lose. You can say, "Congratulations!" or "Great game!"

Think about it. How have you reacted after losing a game? After winning? What can you do differently next time?

Stay calm. If you're upset when you lose, take ten deep breaths, or request a break from your teacher, coach, or parent.

Try again. If you have a bad day or react badly after losing, try to do better next time. Don't avoid a particular game you've previously lost.

What to Do

Answer the following questions.

What are some games you play where there is a winner and a loser?

Winning and losing can bring up lots of different feelings. Review the words that describe emotions.

proud sad excited happy mad confident
horrible disappointed alone successful depressed

How do you feel when you win? _____

How do you feel when you lose? _____

Have you ever heard the terms "poor loser" or "poor sport?" These are labels used for people who don't handle losing very well. Describe what a person might do if they are a poor loser.

Have you ever acted like a poor loser? What happened?

While it's ok to be sad and disappointed when you lose, being a good sport means you handle the loss gracefully. You might not be very happy for the person who won, but you can be a good sport. What can you do when you lose to show good sportsmanship?

It takes practice to be a good sport. Next time you play a game or participate in a team sport, follow these ten tips.

- Be polite to everyone you're playing with and against.
- Don't show off, just play your best.
- Tell your opponents, "Good game!"
- Learn the rules of the game.
- Don't argue or accuse anyone of cheating.
- Don't make up excuses or blame a teammate when you lose.
- Play fair and don't cheat.
- Cheer for your teammates.

Describe what happened.
