

possibility of failing, and the cost of possibly failing is too great. They have learned that it is safer to do only those things that they have already mastered.

As parents, how do you model coping with mistakes—as failures or as learning opportunities?



Putting Knowledge to Work



When you have a question, call or visit your local office of The University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service.

You'll find a friendly, well-trained staff ready to help you with information, advice, and free publications covering agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development.

REVISED BY DON BOWER,

Extension Human Development Specialist,
from publications originally prepared by
Mary White and Mary Anne Pace-Nichols.

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and counties of the state cooperating. The Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia College of Family and Consumer Sciences, and College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences offer educational programs, assistance, and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO A DIVERSE WORK FORCE

CHFD-E 19-25

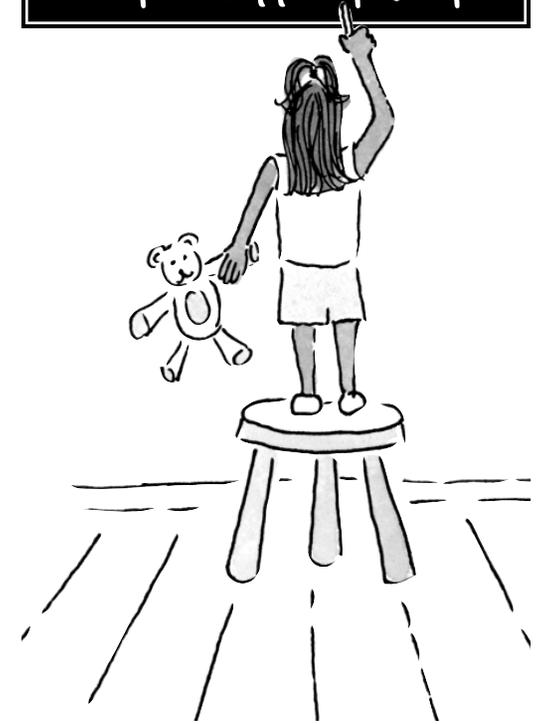
August 2001

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

GALE A. BUCHANAN, DEAN & DIRECTOR

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Help Your Child Cope with Disappointment



The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Family and Consumer Sciences
and College of Agricultural and
Environmental Sciences cooperating

Help Your Child Cope with Disappointment

Everyone has heard the example of Mr. Goodyear, who tried to make rubber hundreds of times before he got it right. If Mr. Goodyear had let failure stop him, we might all be riding around in cars with metal wheels!



Making a mistake is not bad.

Research has shown that the children who are good in math also tend to make more mistakes. These children are not stopped by failure. They continue to explore the problem and search for new solutions. Eventually, they find the right answer.

A math teacher once told a group of parents gathered to learn how to help their children, “No one ever learned anything by being right all of the time!”

One of our jobs as parents is to help children distinguish between mistakes that are

OK because they are learning opportunities, and those that are not because they could be dangerous.

Acceptable mistakes are the result of:

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

Of course, children do have to learn to avoid mistakes under some conditions. Who wants to fly on an airplane whose pilot took a rather relaxed view of making mistakes during landings!

But most of the time mistakes are a fairly routine part of life. When children make mistakes, parents can help them learn to cope effectively.

Children become more “product-oriented” around age eight or nine. They evaluate the things they create and do, such as drawing pictures, playing a game, or taking a test. They begin to develop the mental ability to evaluate their products against a standard, and they may become very critical of their mistakes (or less-than-perfect efforts).

What Can You Do?

Help children learn to have a more relaxed attitude about acceptable mistakes while they figure out ways to improve the outcome in the future by:

- Laughing at ourselves when we make acceptable mistakes.
- Providing enough materials and supplies so children always feel they can start over if they make a mistake.

- Reacting calmly when mistakes do happen. For example, “Oh, well. It didn’t turn out as you hoped. Too bad. We’ll try it again sometime.”
- Helping children learn from their mistakes by focusing on what they could do next time to avoid the problem. “What went wrong? Could you have done something differently?”
- Encouraging children to turn their mistakes into successes. For example, a costume for the school play that didn’t quite turn out as you hoped might be a great Halloween outfit!

It is a heavy burden to feel you can never make a mistake.

Some children grow up in homes that have very high expectations for their “performance.” Children learn that, in order for Mom and Dad to really love me, I must excel at everything I try. Of course, Mom and Dad would deny that that is true, but in the child’s mind, it is.

Being motivated to do your best is a wonderful quality, as long as the focus is more on the *effort* than on the *outcome*.

Many kids enjoy trying new adventures because of the opportunity to have a new experience. Some kids, however, have learned that taking risks means there is the

