Dealing with Disappointment

Millions of people this summer were glued to their televisions watching Olympians from around the world compete for a medal. History was made as athletes broke world records and changed the expectations of performance going forward. We were delighted to see the many gleeful faces celebrating their tremendous achievements; however, there were even more athletes that came to the games to win and did not. The disappointment that those athletes felt must have been enormous. All the training they have done for the past years and all the times they envisioned winning hit a wall of disappointment.

The feeling of disappointment is great and may challenge your beliefs in yourself, your abilities, and your future. How can these athletes that are physically fit and extraordinarily trained, but did not win a medal look towards the next Olympics? We learn from a very early age that things will not always go our way. We come to understand that people may let us down or that our ideas about something do not meet our expectations. If disappointment is not dealt with in an appropriate way, it can lead to bitterness, resentment, doubt, and many other damaging emotions and behaviors. The way you respond to disappointment is more important than the disappointment itself.

Recognize disappointment
Before learning to cope with disappointment, it is important to be able to recognize when you experience it. Feelings of hurt, betrayal, disbelief, and shock accompany disappointment. Your feelings are one of the first key indicators that you have experienced disappointment.

Understand disappointment
Disappointment happens to every one. Disappointment is a natural reaction and a normal response to feeling let down. Even though disappointment is natural and normal, it is important to deal with the effects of disappointment. If disappointment is not dealt with it can do harm to a person, such as leaving a person filled with bitterness, self-pity, or resentment.

Cope with disappointment
Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” Hope allows us to cope; it combats grief, anxiety, and suffering that we may experience in life. We must choose to hope in ourselves to change our expectations, to hope that we can protect ourselves from possible events that may lead to disappointment, and to hope that we will experience healing to forgive and trust again.

Dealing with disappointment is a process and is experienced differently by each person. Allow yourself time and space to work through life’s disappointments. In a similar way as those athletes that did not win a medal, turn your disappointments into motivation to change.

An EAP therapist can help you find solutions in dealing with disappointment. Please call 743-1EAP and schedule an appointment.

EAP Workshops: We offer a variety of wellness workshops. Visit our website for more information http://www.eap.ttuhsc.edu

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EAP UPDATE
Helpful Information From Your Employee Assistance Program

September 2008
5 Tips to deal with Disappointment

- Give yourself time to process what happened.
- Figure out what emotions you are feeling. This will help prevent any impulsive and irrational reactions from taking place.
- Be aware of your thoughts. It is difficult not to think in extremes during times of disappointment (e.g., “this ALWAYS happens to me”); however, look for ways to change your thinking to being more positive or neutral (e.g., “since this happened to me, what can I do in this situation to make it better?”)
- Reflect on what may have caused the disappointment. For instance, ask yourself, “What did I do to feel disappointed?” Perhaps it was having too high of expectations or not having adequate preparation. If it involves someone else, what was their role in the situation?
- Consider talking about the disappointment with someone else. It may benefit you to talk directly with the person who disappointed you. They may not realize the impact they had on you. Having a conversation about how you feel may help your relationship and prevent further disappointment.

Questions or Comments about the Newsletter? We would love to hear from you! Please contact us at 743-1EAP or email your comments to Faith.Drew@ttuhsc.edu.

Helping Your Kids Deal with Disappointment

One of the hardest things for parents to do is watch our kids struggle with disappointment. Here are some tips to help your kids bounce back and prevent a bigger problem from developing:

- Prevent the "I'm a failure" syndrome from taking root. Let your child know that even though something did not turn out well, that does not make him or her a failure. Separate what happened from who they are. Make it clear that a defeat or loss does not mean he or she's no good.
- When your child experiences a disappointment, discuss it and help him or her learn from the experience. Emphasize the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and not giving up or feeling like a failure because of one bad experience.
- When your child is suffering a disappointment, remind him or her of other times when things did not go well but ended up okay. Let your child know you've felt that way too.
- Tell your child about times when you've had a similar experience and how you recovered.

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