

Dr. Steve Kahn, Ph.D, L.P. and Associates
2697 East County Road E White Bear Lake, MN 55110
stevekahn@comcast.net 651-426-4297 www.drstevekahn.com

Chemical Education Specialists

Lee Soderlind, B.A., LADC
Kirsten Dawson, M.A.

Counselors

Joey Kellogg, M.S.
Deanna Lilienthal, M.A.

Counselors

Mary Oppegaard, M.A.
Pamela A. Anderson, M.A.
Angela DeNardo Meagher, M.A.
Joy Wedan, M.S.
Heidi Wessman, M.A.

Counselors

Rebecca Pingel, M.A.
Ana Carter, MBA
Tami Langlois, M.A.
Katy Berglund, M.A.
Sara Belleau, M.A.

Wishing for (but not expecting) a smooth road

With the school year beginning, we are all wishing for the new year to be filled with many great opportunities and experiences for our children, without too many hurts and disappointments. And all of us would do whatever we possibly could to ensure their safety and happiness.

But the world may hold surprises for us that we do not expect or invite into our family lives. Perhaps a best friend will move to a different state as a result of a parent's job transfer. Maybe their new teacher will be more "business-like" than "touchy-feely." They may not be placed in the same class as their friends or perhaps the ratio of boys to girls may be less than ideal. They might feel left out at recess or they may get cut from a team or find the ACT more difficult than they anticipated.

For this article, let's consider all of the above to be examples of the inevitability of an imperfect world occasionally imposing on the ideal conditions we wish our children would have at all times. Let me use the "ratio of boys to girls" issue to tell you a little bit about the difference between how my mother raised me and how differently parents seem to be viewing life's disappointments recently.

For those of you who don't know me, let me just tell you that I am 55 and that my mother was born in 1925. She was a child during the depression and a teenager during WWII. She taught me that it was up to me to deal with whatever life had in store for me and she specifically did not teach me, by her words or her actions, that the world should always be the way I wanted it to be.

Now I see parents seriously considering changing schools if the ratio of boys to girls is not ideal! And lobbying their principals for the teacher their child wants. Arguing or pressuring coaches for additional playing time and getting mad at teachers if an ACT score is disappointing. What does this teach our children?

What I worry the most about this is that this parenting approach seems to weaken children rather than strengthen them and does nothing to teach them the skills they will need to deal with times in their future when they do not get exactly what they were hoping for or what they thought they deserved.

Handled well, children can learn important lessons from every disappointment. However, handled poorly, children may learn that every disappointment is powerful and injurious, and that the only times they can feel comfortable with their life is when absolutely everything unfolds smoothly.

That is not what my mother taught me and I doubt it was what you learned from your parents either. While it is hard to tell a child who was wishing for Mrs. Jones that they have Mrs. Smith for a teacher (and that their friends both have Mrs. Jones), we can at least use this less-than-ideal moment to show our children by our model that disappointments are a normal part of life, that we have confidence that they will be able to deal with it, that there may be blessings in this disappointment that we cannot see yet, and that no matter what, we will be right next to them every step of the way.

Dr. Steve Kahn

Adapted from Dr. Kahn's book [Insightful Parenting: Making Moments Count](#)

Available at www.drstevekahn.com

stevekahn@comcast.net

651-426-4297