

Summer is one of my favorite seasons. I love the longer days of sunlight, watching fireflies come out, dripping ice cream cones, firework celebrations, and extra time spent with family. Summer is often a time for long days at the beach, diving into swimming pools, and family vacations. As you know, this summer, however, things are unfolding very differently. Due to the current health crisis, several of these much anticipated events have been cancelled or indefinitely delayed. Many families now find themselves having to explain to their children about why the pool isn't open, why they have to watch fireworks on TV, and why they won't be going on the trip that they had planned. Needless to say, I am sure that many families are finding that they are having to navigate their children's disappointment now more than they ever had.

Disappointment is one of those emotions that we hope to avoid, particularly when it comes to our loved ones or our children experiencing it. As parents, it is difficult to see our children struggle and encounter heartache. Of course, it is nearly impossible to shield our children from disappointment; we live in an imperfect world where things don't go as planned all of the time. Even with the best of intentions, things can fall apart or unexpectedly go wrong. While we don't ever want to purposefully see a child feel a loss of what they expected, as educators, we know that we are quite possibly doing our children a disservice by not teaching them to deal with it in an appropriate way. This is one of the reasons that we try to teach our preschoolers, how to handle disappointment and even failure. It is one of those social-emotional skills that we try to address whenever possible. Preschool is an ideal place to help children develop and understand their social competence in a developmentally appropriate way. Since there are so many new friends and opportunities to play and explore, discovering and practicing social emotional skills is easily done. In doing so, we are offering children tools which will help guide them to a path to be more successful in their future academic and general daily endeavors.

So how can educators and parents teach children the skills to overcome life's setbacks? I think that first we need to help our children label the feeling of disappointment and then help them recognize that it is normal. We should allow our children to know that it's alright to feel sad and disappointed, but then help them find a way to manage that disappointment. It's important for children to see that adults have disappointments too. We should be models for our children to understand how we have dealt with our setbacks. Be an example to them of resilience. While listening and discussing with our children, it is also a good time to practice problem solving and perhaps even planning for another opportunity to try again.

Additionally, there are many great formal resources available. Internet searches will yield a multitude of books and activities about disappointment. Some of my favorites also incorporate how to manage feeling mad or upset. Mark Teague's "How do

Dinosaurs....” books teach about finding other solutions and “Train Your Angry Dragon” or “The Tantrum Monster” are some other good choices as well.

Finally, as teachers of our Catholic faith, we should remind our children that God is always with us, even when things have been turned upside down. We can always turn to God to help us cope and overcome our feelings of despair. I think that the words from Psalm 34 are appropriate for young and old alike. They are important to remind us that God will never leave us. Even though we don’t always understand or clearly see, God will always comfort and provide for us; all we need to do is remain strong in our faith.

*”The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*  
Psalm 34:18

To learn more about becoming part of our incredible preschool family and the opportunities we provide, please visit our website at [www.preschoolatstfrancis.com](http://www.preschoolatstfrancis.com) or contact Shelley Freeman at: [shelley.freeman@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:shelley.freeman@stfrancisraleigh.org).

With Joy,

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