

‘A teachable moment’: The only upside to your kids missing out on Taylor Swift tickets



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Many parents will have their work cut out for them this weekend, wondering how to alleviate their child, tween or teenager’s disappointment about missing out on seeing Taylor Swift live. (And yes, some parents will also have to juggle this with their own sadness about not witnessing the superstar in action.)

But given we all know that disappointment is one of life’s few guarantees, what can we do to help our kids who are getting mopey or mad at home, while others are living out their dream?



Disappointment is a real and raw emotion. ISTOCK

Let them feel the pain

It can be tempting to embark on a swift (ahem) distraction mission to try and take our kids' minds off their disappointment, but experts say this isn't necessarily the best course of action.

"Parents can feel like they have failed in their role as parents if their child is sad, and they have not been able to give them everything they want in life," says Donna Cameron, registered psychologist from The Couch Therapy.

"Look at children's birthday parties these days – if a child wants a pony and a unicorn cake, the parent will do everything they can to get the pony and unicorn cake! Children do not hear the word 'no' very often, and parents put themselves under a lot of pressure to create a perfect world for them, which can create issues in the future."

Instead of immediately whisking them out for a conciliatory gelato or buying them a gift, Derek McCormack, director of the Raising Children Network, encourages parents to acknowledge what their kids are feeling.

"You can't take away the sting of the initial feeling, but you can talk through the feeling with your child. Don't dismiss the feeling, but sympathise and model self-compassion," he says.

"You might say, 'It's OK to feel sad and disappointed', and you might model self-compassion by saying, 'I've been disappointed in the past when this thing happened to me'."

Focus on the silver lining

Cameron believes that disappointing moments, like missing out on your favourite artist's concert or not making the basketball grand final, are often wonderful teachable moments.

"Children need to experience feelings, such as disappointment, and learn how to manage different emotions while they have their parent's guidance and support," she says. "They will need skills as adults to cope with all emotions, and these situations need to be viewed as learning opportunities for your child's future."

Dr Jane Foster, emotional resilience expert and author of *It's In Your Hands*, likens disappointment to driving on a rough road. "I ask parents, 'What road do you think improves your driving skills: a rough road or a smooth one?' And they all say, 'Rough'," she explains.

"But what's interesting is that we're all constantly lifting our kids off the rough roads and putting them on the smooth ones because we want them to have a smooth life – but that's impossible and unattainable. And then when they're left on the rough road by themselves, they crash because there's no one there to pick them up."

Disappointment can manifest in many ways, from tears to isolation to lashing out, so Foster says the first step is to help them calm down if they're feeling out of control.

"They might need to go to their bedroom and listen to music or jump on the trampoline or shoot a few hoops – once they calm down, they're back in touch with their brain's prefrontal cortex, their thinking, creative brain," she says.

Once they're calm, Foster suggests parents ask young people to come up with their own ideas to help them feel better. "We need to give kids the space to go, 'What makes me feel good?'" she says.

"It might be having a Taylor Swift night at home or inviting some friends over who didn't get to go either. But you don't offer that at the beginning as a quick fix – it's something [kids] need to work out."

Encourage kids to be curious

The unlucky kids who didn't get Taylor Swift tickets might feel a little left out of conversations at school the next day, but some genuine curiosity can go a long way to bridging the gap.

"A fantastic skill a parent can teach a child is the ability to celebrate the experiences and achievements of their friends – talk to your child about asking their friends questions about the event and what their favourite part was,"

Cameron says.

“They can express to their friends that they were disappointed they could not go but are excited about what their friends experienced. Learning to do this at a young age will assist in maintaining positive friendships in their adult lives.”

And if nothing else, Foster says it’s worth remembering that Taylor Swift is not immune to disappointment herself.

“Most of her songs have come out of being on a rough road – that’s how we grow,” she points out. “We need to celebrate those roads and give our kids the strategies to be able to regain and maintain control of their own steering wheel.”

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