

5 Faith-Filled Factors to Help When Your Child Disappoints You

The Winter Olympics are over, and in a way, I'm glad. Too many late nights watching figure skaters, snowboarders, downhill skiers and bobsledders are wearing me out.

Hurting parents of troubled children are worn out from countless late nights, too. I think we have a lot in common with Olympic athletes. See if you agree.

World champions went to the games with high expectations for winning a medal or setting a world record. Time, money, and energy were invested and sacrifices were made. They set goals, trained hard and devoted themselves for years. They wanted to be sure they did everything in their power to make their dreams come true.

But everyone can't win. Athletes whose hopes and dreams were unmet felt let down, disappointed, and discouraged. Some were devastated. They had to accept their limitations. They could do their best and no more. "You can't get blood out of a turnip," my parents used to say.

The clock determined some results, while others were in the hands of judges. They had to surrender to the outcome. They had no control over how things turned out. Most didn't go home with a medal.

Do you see any commonalities between the Olympics and brokenhearted parents yet?

I do. I'm one of those parents. I've been on a difficult path with my daughter for over 10 years. Today I realize how much pressure I put on myself. My expectations were high—for her

and for me. *If I did everything right, shouldn't she thrive in every way? After all, I tried to be the best parent I could be. What could go wrong?*

Great amounts of time and energy were joyfully invested to ensure all three of my children turned out well. I never expected anything to go awry, so when my middle child struggled with depression, cutting and substance abuse, I was devastated. *How could this happen? What more could I have done?*

What a huge disappointment. How discouraged and let-down I felt. I'd left no room in my parental belief system for how things transpired.

There's nothing wrong with having big dreams for our children. But after we do our best, like Olympic athletes, we must let go of the outcome. We have no control over what happens. In time, I learned to release my beloved daughter to God and trust Him with the outcome of her life.

I let her go.

This was one of the hardest things I'd ever done. There was no guarantee of what would happen.

Five Things That Helped Me Survive My Difficult Parenting Experience;

1. Let your child learn from consequences. Leave room for mistakes. Goals are good, but try not to set the bar too high. Leave room for poor choices common to maturing adolescents. We're not perfect, either. Expect some challenges, but be careful not to become cynical.
2. Refuse to accept all the blame for your child's troubles. Reject false guilt and accept what is. We did the best we could. Beating ourselves up won't change anything. Our children get to choose what they will do, and so do we.

3. Trust God with your child. Don't play the *what if* We can't win. Instead of worrying, remember He is in control and loves our children even more than we do.
4. Get help. Find resources. No athlete ever qualified for the Olympics without participating on special teams and receiving excellent coaching. Greatness isn't achieved by their efforts alone. They depended on experts. Like world-class athletes, we need to accept the help of those who know more than we do.
5. Never give up on your child. Persevere. Refuse to quit believing they can change. This experience is like a marathon. We must keep our eyes on the goal: crossing the finish line. We never know what tomorrow might bring. Anything is possible.

Prayer: *Dear God, please heal the hearts of disappointed, worn-out parents. Help them be content with what is and make peace with what they cannot change. Give them victory in You as they let go of what they hoped for and trust You to work in their children's lives.*

A book that helped me trust God with disappointment: *Shattered Dreams* by Larry Crabb (in our recommended book list),

What has helped you let go and trust God? {eoa}

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