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Ask Ariel: Should My Soccer Fan Try-Out?



Dear Ariel,

My 8-year-old son loves sports. He is an enthusiastic soccer player and would wear his team jersey every day if he had the option. Now he is at an age when all the leagues have become very competitive and he will have to try out to make a team. He has various physical disabilities that will likely mean he will never make it past the tryouts. My question is, do I let my son try out and likely fail, or do I shield him from the disappointment that this next level of soccer will bring?

Signed, Confused Soccer Mom

<http://www.portlandfamily.com/posts/ask-ariel-soccer-fan-tryout/>

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Dear CSM,

You have described a situation that all parents would like to protect their child from: the pain of heartbreak. The problem is, we can't. We can't safeguard our children from all the disappointments and cruel situations they will have in their lives. Your predicament is particularly challenging because of your son's passion for soccer.

Perhaps rather than "How do we prevent heartbreak?" a better question is, "Should we prevent heartbreak?" I am a firm believer in allowing children to take risks and then dealing with the consequences as parents and children afterward. By giving our kids opportunities to try things that may be beyond their capacity, we help instill a belief that they are capable people. If the child fails, then the experience will help build resiliency — a key ingredient to long-term success. In this case, I would recommend allowing your son to try out for the soccer team. If he doesn't make the team, you can talk with him about his feelings about the experience. If he is never given the opportunity to try, neither of you will ever know what he might achieve.

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SHARES

Ariel Frager



Ariel Frager is a school counselor and has a private therapy practice that specializes in treating children, adolescents and families. She lives in Portland with her husband, son, dog and kitty cat.



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