

COMPETITIVE SPIRIT: GOOD OR BAD?

Words: Tanya Curtis

Dear Tanya: My daughter rarely competes in any events as she has the mindset that she will be no good and fail - how can I get her to have a go and know it's ok to? My son is a very competitive person - whether it's extra-curricular sport or even just around home doing chores and playing with his sister. I'm wondering if this is a good/bad behaviour and whether it needs addressing?

Competition is one of the most harming characteristics that exists in today's population. Competition? Harming? But why, you ask? 'Harming' is a strong word to use, I know, but I cannot reiterate enough from a psychological wellbeing perspective how harming competition can be and how it can impact on a child's behavior choices, future self-esteem, wellbeing and mental health. Competition contributes significantly to the 'better and lesser-than effect'. Competition leads people to subscribe to the belief that:

1. I am better than another if I win, come first or perform a skill better.
2. I am lesser than another if I lose, come second, third or last, or when someone performs a skill better than me.

FACT: No person in this world is better or lesser than another.

FACT: Yes, it is true that some people are more skilled in certain parts of life and less skilled in other parts of life. But a better or lesser skill level does not make you a better or lesser person.

FACT: Every single person in this world is an equal. Yes, absolutely go and play games, have fun and enjoy life, but by no means should sport, games or activities ever be played at the expense of another. Thus they should not ever be played in the energy of competition.

So why play? Well, what if games were about hanging out with mates, enjoying each other's company, learning to work as a group or developing new skills to respond to life?

Games should never be about one person/team feeling lesser than another - rather played in the foundational principle that every single person in this world is an equal, albeit we all have varying skills

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