

## TO COMPETE OR NOT TO COMPETE?

As exams draw to a close, there is a feeling of happiness, joy, excitement and relief in the air- amongst our children and parents too!! After the initial euphoria, other feelings will surface for both- the anticipation of the results, anxiety about the marks, a feeling of competitiveness- about how the child has performed and how his/her friends have performed!

Competition is inevitable in our social world. This feeling of competitiveness is derived not just from our social and personal experiences but also from our core family dynamics. Home is a place where a child first builds their self-image. Children are taught very young that in order for them to win, someone else has to lose. Your child may seem like she's/ he's in the midst of a competition every moment. They want to be the first one to get to the car, first to choose the seat, first in the queue at school. They may also want to be the best always and dislike losing, and may ask you- "Whose drawing is the best? Who played the best game? etc.

There is a debate which has been going on for years now- [a debate about competition](#). There are some who feel that competition is the best motivator- medals and trophies do motivate a child to strive for excellence. But there are others who feel that if parents focus on competition all the time, they may unknowingly send out a message that a child's self-worth is only dependent on their achievements, thus damaging a child's self-growth. In a house with more than one child, this feeling of competition may even seep in between siblings or cousins. Eg: - Whoever picks up their toys quickly will get the bigger piece of the cake.

Let us introspect on the [causes of this competition](#) and why we, as parents, hold on to it?

- Because we think it is the only way to motivate our children?
- Because if we do not offer rewards to our child, he/she may not want to do/achieve anything in life?
- Because we want to prepare them for the outside world- the rat race which everyone inevitably becomes a part of?

As parents, we always want our child to excel- whether in academics or extracurricular. Competition does help in keeping the children motivated and bringing out excellence. However, excessive competitiveness can have negative long-term effects on children. An unhealthy obsession with comparison and outdoing others can do more harm than good. Here are a few signs to be mindful of, that will show you if you have become an [over competitive parent](#).

- As a parent, if you seek validation through your child's achievements, your self-worth is determined by your child's victory, or if you find yourself putting your own aspirations and ambitions on your children, you may push your child rather than supporting him in a healthy way. E.g.: - As a child, you have been an excellent athlete and have excelled in sports. You may set high standards for your child as well to excel in sports while his liking and interest may lie in another activity.
- If you regularly boast about your child's accomplishments and seek admiration from others.
- If you have started 'doing' your children's projects for them because all the other parents are, rather than letting them learn, you too have entered into the competition race.

[Here's how to avoid being an extra competitive parent](#) and prevent it from affecting your child.

[Shift the focus to healthy competition](#): - Healthy competition places a strong emphasis on fairness, respect, and sportsmanship. A growth mindset emphasizes continuous improvement and learning; challenges are seen as opportunities for growth rather than as threats. This mindset fosters resilience, adaptability, and collaboration.

Beat your own past records  
and consider yourself as your  
competitor, to grow everyday.



**Winning is not everything:** - Help your child to understand that not everyone can win every competition. Encourage them to focus on the event rather than the outcome. As parents, you can have a significant influence on your child's competitiveness, affecting how children perceive competition, handle challenges, and develop a sense of achievement. If you excessively emphasize external rewards (such as trophies or praise based on winning) you may undermine a child's intrinsic motivation to succeed. Avoid public discussions about your child's performance.

**Let your child learn from failure:** - Encourage them to look back and focus on what went wrong instead of giving up (Resilience). After a setback, ask questions like, "What did you learn from this?" or "What could you have done differently?" so that the next time they are faced with a similar situation, they can try things differently.

**Avoid pressurizing for perfection:** - It is not practically possible for us to be good at everything. Instead of pressurizing the child into taking part in every exam or competition and expecting perfection in everything that they do, focus on their strengths and slowly and consistently work on their weaknesses. ***Be happy with your child's performance and accept them unconditionally for who they are, rather than comparing them with others.***

**Teach your child teamwork:** During project work, encourage children to step out of their comfort zone and work with different classmates, other than their friends. Initially it may be difficult for the child to work with children of different temperaments in the group and incorporates everyone's ideas. But this is how they will develop their social skills. Instead of blaming each other and being upset with each other for a loss, they need to work with the strengths of each team member, work on the obstacles and overcome the challenges. They also learn to share and take turns. They will realize that winning is not based solely on his performance but the performance of the team. Teach them to celebrate each other's success rather than feeling jealous and envious.

**CELEBRATE THE SUCCESS OF OTHERS. HIGH TIDE FLOATS ALL SHIPS.**

By: -  
Niti Parekh  
Pooja Balaria  
School Counselor  
P.G. Garodia School