

Casting Expectations

Helping Your Child Cope with Casting Disappointments

Unfortunately, in the theatre world, there will be a lot of disappointments. Many professional actors will tell you that they spend more time auditioning for roles than they do on stage. This is a fact of life in the theatre, and one that can be very hard, especially for children, to accept. There are only so many parts in the show, so not everyone who auditions will be cast. It is also not a guarantee that your child will be cast in the same size role as someone else. If your child is upset with the role that he/she received, here are some suggestions for helping him/her deal with this disappointment:

- **Be a positive role model.** Although we all like to believe that our son or daughter is a superstar, having realistic expectations yourself will help your child cope with his/her own disappointment if, by chance, s/he doesn't get the part s/he was looking forward to getting. Encourage your child to do his/her best, but also let him/her know that you will support him/her no matter what role s/he may receive. Our children look to us for the appropriate way to respond to difficult situations, and if you act disappointed, then your child will certainly be disappointed too.
- **Be proactive!** Make sure that your child doesn't have unrealistic expectations. It would be helpful before the start of your child's participation, to sit down with him/her and explain how the casting process works. Although we want to encourage every child to do his/her best and to go ahead and try for the role s/he wants, it is equally as important to stress some of the following ideas.
- **Putting on a play is a team effort.** Every person in a production, even those offstage, is equally important. Every role in a play is important; otherwise the playwright wouldn't have written them in. You can look at it like a puzzle; all the pieces are needed to complete the puzzle. If even one piece is missing, there will be a flaw in the whole production. Just like in sports, all the members of the team need to work together in order to win the game. If a player just suddenly decides he isn't important enough and leaves, it puts the whole team at risk. And any coach could tell you, a last-minute change in the line-up can cost you the whole game. The same is true for theatre.
- **A role is what you make of it.** Every role counts. The more different "types" of roles you play, the broader your experience becomes, and the more you learn what it takes to become a better performer. If you have a large role, then you can work on things like memorizing lines. If you have a smaller role, then you can work things like reacting to what is happening on stage or working as an ensemble.
- **We all can't be the lead.** We all can't be the quarterback, the class president, the team captain, or the CEO. Although our desires may be strong, there are only so many lead roles in one production.
- **Not today, but maybe tomorrow.** Any actor will tell you, you may be playing the lead today, but in the next show, you'll be in the ensemble. And in the show after that, you'll be the lead again.

- **Find the silver lining.** The lead isn't always going to be the best part for you. Often times, if you give it a chance, you will find the non-lead roles can be more fun. And most of the time, you will find, that it doesn't have anything to do with what role you are playing. Often times, it's the team you are working with that makes the whole experience worth while. Many actors can tell you some of their favorite shows have been the ones where they played in the ensemble or chorus. It had nothing to do with the show, but everything to do with the friends they made while doing it.
- **It doesn't always come down to talent.** Many actors could regale you with stories of how they *just missed* landing a juicy role, and why? They were too tall, too thin, too baritone, too round in the face, they were going to miss three rehearsals, they didn't have the right chemistry with the other lead, and so on. It had absolutely nothing to do with their talents. Not getting cast doesn't necessarily mean you are a bad actor.
- **No one else could do it as well as you.** Sometimes a person gets cast into a role, because the director felt like he/she was the best choice for the role. By asking a director why you got cast in one role and not another, you may actually be pleasantly surprised at the answer. It may be because you were the only one that had the voice for it, the only one that could pull off the comedic timing, the only one that could play the role exactly as the director envisioned it. In other words, you were the BEST actor for the job. You could have played the lead, but then there would not be someone as qualified in the role you *did* get.
- **Be the best you can be.** Constantin Stanislavsky had one of the most famous quotes in theater: "There are no small parts, only small actors." What he meant by that, in addition to all that has been said above, is that every director, every actor in a show, every crew member, every producer, every person involved expects everyone – not just the leads – to put forth their all when being part of a production. The saying "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link" also applies here. If even one person is not giving it his/her best shot, then the play as a whole will suffer.
- **Never too young to learn.** We here at BAC feel that, although it can be a difficult lesson to learn, it is best to start teaching our students about the realities of the casting process while they are still young and much more willing to adapt. If we don't attempt to teach them this lesson, then they may be in for a long road of disappointments in the future. Theatre can be fun, but only when we learn how to make it so!
- **You are here to learn!** These classes/programs are designed to help children grow and learn in a theatrical environment. And there is something to learn from each production you do, from each role you play, and from each director/instructor you work with. Focus on the learning and the attempt to become a better actor, and you may be surprised at how much you'll get out of what you once considered to be a "small" role.