

“It’s Their Loss”...Coping with Rejection

Reality is that unfortunately all of us will not get everything we want and have to deal with “no” as an answer. This may happen with something particularly important to us and the idea of not taking it personally becomes even more difficult to resist. This is rejection.

Risa Lewak, the author of “Don’t Stalk the Admissions Officer: How to Survive the College Admissions Process Without Losing Your Mind” suggests (with my paraphrasing included) that “when faced with a college or scholarship rejection letter, it’s important to abide by a couple of rules”:

- * Do not ask the admissions committee why you weren’t selected. They will probably be offended by the question and if you do get an answer you won’t like it, thus only making the problem worse.
- * Do not write, email, fax, call, or throw a rock with a message attached through a window of the admissions committee to let them know that “They’ll pay for this someday!”
- * Do not ignore the letter, pretend you never got it, and show up on campus with your backpack and binder on the first day of school. Definitely don’t start going to classes.
- * Do not resend the identical application, essay, etc (with your name or under a different name) the following year. If you want to reapply respect the committee’s intelligence and start the application from scratch.
- * Remember, or at least try really hard to, that colleges aren’t rejecting you, all they have seen is an application and they’re rejecting a few pieces of paper. So technically, they are making a decision based on paper without ever having actually met you.

Bottom line, there is no good way to sugarcoat rejection and make it any less uncomfortable. Keep in mind that the level of hurt you experience will probably be directly linked to how important getting in to the school was to you. If your first choice college turned you down, expect it to cause some measurable grief and you may be hibernating in your room for a while. If you didn’t really care about getting in, it may not bother you at all (or at least the sting should be a lot less painful). Bottom line, feeling lousy about rejection is normal and you are better off trying not to beat yourself up over it.

Something to keep in mind, during grieving periods you may be entitled to some perks not always available to you. Some students have used this time of extreme emotional vulnerability to get:

- ③ Unlimited access to the family car ↪ A new puppy
- ↪ Upgrades to cell phone plans
- 💰 Gift cards to REI

OK, these may nothing more than wishful thinking, in your state it doesn’t hurt to dream a bit. On the up side, fortunately there are several coping strategies to try if you are faced with that dreaded thin envelope:

Let time heal you...this too shall pass. In a week, it will hurt a little less, in two weeks, even less and eventually you won’t even remember that you applied. Kind of like the boy, or girl, who stood you up...before long you didn’t even remember their name.

Remind yourself, “it’s their loss”...I know this doesn’t minimize what happened and this cliché never works, give it a try anyway. If you repeat it like a mantra over and over again, maybe you’ll believe it.

Commiserate with others...find all the other really awesome friends you know who didn’t get in to their “first choice” college they applied to and whose qualities, like yours, were overlooked. Misery loves company.

Go ahead, brood...grief is real and it's OK to dwell on your circumstances for a while. Allow yourself some time to obsess, sulk, vent – anything* helpful that will get some of the pain out of your system). Don't however, indulge too long. Having a pity party won't accomplish recovery and if you're still crying at your graduation ceremony...get some help working through this.

**Point to grasp: don't do anything to fix a problem that actually makes you worse or creates a problem for others.*

Acknowledge your inadequacy...truth is you may not have been good enough. The admissions committee, the highly skilled group of individuals who woke up that morning and scrutinized only your application under a microscope, was obviously very insightful in detecting flaws in your character, deficiencies in your talents, and the shortcomings of your intelligence from just a few sheets of paper.

Do you see how ridiculous that sounds? In the end no one, or any college, can make you feel inferior without you letting it happen. You have to actually give yourself, and them permission to let them make you feel something...you would have to give them your consent.

The best thing you can do is focus on, and get excited about, where you are going or what you are doing, after high school. Instead of dwelling on rejections, use this time productively and start considering your options. Immerse yourself in the idea of attending other colleges, doing a Gap Year and helping construct wells in Africa, or work at a job where you can gain life experience and earn money for the school you eventually choose to attend.

Once you have gotten over it you can think more clearly and decide on the school that will be fortunate enough to have you enroll; and don't be afraid of being a little cheesy, go on there website and buy yourself a couple of tee shirts, your grand parents matching sweatshirts, your dad a baseball cap, and your mom a bumper sticker for her car; heck...dress up the dog with a bandana.

Get excited about all the opportunities you have after you graduate. If you find yourself in a situation like the one above (or for that matter, any other concern) don't be afraid to come in, vent a little if you need to...my Counseling Office is registered by the No Judgment Police as an official "no rejection" zone.

Counselor John

To properly give credit due where credit is earned: the concept of this article came from Ms. Lewak, (referenced earlier). I just added a few of the more comical touches (you don't have to agree with me... I think they're funny).