

Why I support my child's delusions of grandeur

My child thinks he's going to be in the NBA. Although I know he has delusions of grandeur, I'm not about to step in front of his impossible dream.

It all started when my eleven-year old son joined the basketball team and began harboring dreams to become a basketball star. While some parents might not allow for such grandiose delusions at his age, I'm agreeing with him. "Sure, you'll be a professional player if God wills it and you work hard enough," I told him yesterday, even though I know it won't happen.

My apprehensions should not stop my son from dreaming. I support my child's delusions of grandeur because I think it's okay to set kids up to fail their own expectations. In fact, it's important that they set themselves up for failure while a child so that later in life they'll understand the boundaries of expectations. That might sound harsh, but the necessity to support his self-esteem now outweighs the necessity to protect him from eminent failure.

Create the foundation for success that might never come

I bought him a basketball ring, a Spalding basketball, and I go with him to the basketball court in our town. I even told him he's good enough to join the advanced basketball league for 15 and younger.

A [child's contest can go too far](#) but I follow what [Dr. Martha Ewing](#) of the Sports Institute in Michigan said about why children should drop out of an organized sport: They drop out because either they're not having fun or they're not socializing with friends. My child says he has both, so on we go!

As one of the youngest players on the team, he's currently sitting on the bench. I can see him scratching his head about this setback and trying to reconcile how he's going to play in the NBA if he's still sitting on the bench. He justifies it by saying that most of his teammates are fourteen and fifteen, but he doesn't complain. My child's delusions of grandeur can be confusing for him at times, so that's just another mental exercise for him to work out for himself as he grows into adulthood. Being realistic is a skill that takes practice.

Don't Lie

I support my child's delusions of grandeur while avoiding telling him outright lies about what I think. My husband and I tell him where he needs to improve, and we give him pointers relentlessly. This method is related to how things will work for him in the real world. When you are good, you get more game time – that's true. But when you work on being good and criticize yourself constructively, then a child can learn to be great. When you are not good, you have to work harder. Sitting on the bench teaches him to work for something he really wants. "You probably shouldn't be sitting on the bench if you're good enough for the NBA," I told him.

We never fail to tell him about his strong points as a basketball player and as a team member. In fact, it boosts his morale. We make it a point that we do not sugarcoat and exaggerate. The truth will help him reach his dreams – this I know for sure.

Your expectations are different than your child's expectations

Positive parenting is something [websites love to preach with rules](#) that they assume apply to both parents and children. Children, by their very nature, do not have realistic expectations. That's one of the aspects of childhood that is most endearing. You can approach your children knowing they are not perfect, but smart kids will assume they are perfect – and that's okay. Perfect thinking leads to perfection in play and work.

[Popular opinion holds](#) that delusions of grandeur is directly impacted by self-esteem. There is a claim that these delusions are unhealthy in adults, but what is bad for us may not be bad for kids. One of the major flaws parents can have is to enforce adult sensibilities on children who are not yet ready to be adults. Self-worth, power, knowledge, identity and relationships are all impacted by my child's delusions of grandeur, and I intend to mold them into something he will accept and trust as he grows into an adult. Realistic expectations are a practiced discipline – and I'm going to make sure he gets this practice by supporting all those dreams he sets up. Let him fail and learn to control them as he goes along.