

Coaching the Loss: A Grown-Up's Turn

From the practice of Elliott McCray, Ed.S., The McCray Learning Lab

What this builds (transformative SEL): Agency (“I can do it”).

This practice is grounded in **emotion-coaching research (John Gottman)**: children whose big feelings are named and allowed, rather than dismissed or fixed away, calm down faster and recover from setbacks better, alongside the **growth-mindset and deliberate-practice findings** of Carol Dweck and Anders Ericsson: praise the effort and the strategy, keep the door open with “yet,” and turn a loss into one thing to practice. Rushing a child past a loss quietly teaches that the feeling was wrong, that losing is something to fear, and that the lesson inside the setback can be skipped. Let the loss be real, and it becomes a teacher.

The swaps, ready to grab

- Instead of “You’ll win next time” → **“You haven’t got that down... yet.”** Keep the door open without an empty promise.
- Instead of “The ref was terrible” → **“That call hurt. What can we control next time?”** Feel it, then aim it.
- Instead of “Shake it off, it’s just a game” → **“This one stings, and we come back from it.”** Let it be real, then model the bounce.

This is a **practice tool for rehearsing skills, not therapy, counseling, or a clinical service**. And it never shames the grown-up: the “you’ll win next time” instinct comes from love; this is just practice for the words.

Want the kid version? [Open “Train Like a Champion”](#) and read it with your child: same three words, told from Riley and Sprout’s side.

Your privacy: if you use the optional “say it” recorder, your voice stays on this device: it is never saved, never uploaded, and it is gone when the page closes.

From The McCray Learning Lab. Elliott McCray, Ed.S.

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