CATW #1 MODEL ESSAY

People in today’s world are constantly told how great they are, not only with praise but also with awards. This perpetual award giving makes awards lose their significance. Author Ashley Merryman confronts this issue in her article “Losing Is Good for You.” She argues that it is actually productive for kids to lose, rather than always think they’re winning. She makes the point that trophies used to mean something more than just charity. Merryman also observes that giving kids trophies for losing can cause them not to give their best try at something, and prevent them from understanding progress. Finally, she notes that life is more about losses than wins and children should learn this early on. I believe giving trophies to children for losing takes away the meaning of winning.

To begin with, today trophies do not have as much meaning as they used to. Historically, trophies were given to specific people who achieved more than others in a specific skill. Today I see trophies just being given out to everyone on a team who is participating. What is kids’ movitvation to distinguish themselves or try harder, if this is always the case? As the author states in the passage, “when it comes to rewards, people argue that kids must be treated identically: everyone must always win”. I agree with Merryman’s point that this is “misguided” because if I know that I’m going to get rewarded the same thing as everyone else, even if they have more ability, I wouldn’t put any effort into what I am doing.

Winning an award even if one does poorly can prevent people not only from making an effort but also from improving at a skill. In the passage, the author brings up the Oklahoma Little League and the angry parent complaining to a local reporter that his children value their trophy “as much as playing the game.” I agree with the woman cited in the article, Jean Twenge, author of “Generation Me,” that this is a serious problem. Part of the joy in sports is the game itself, not just the championship cup or ring. Even professional athletes do not win all the time, and they know they have to improve their weaknesses in order to do better the next time. Also, I feel that kids should participate in extracurricular activities, whether it’s baseball, chess, swimming, or debate club, because the activities are enjoyable, not because they want to display a trophy in their room at home.

Merryman makes most of her points about kids’ sports but in her article she also makes the larger argument that life is more about losing than winning. I believe this true. As kids, we grow up knowing that life is not always easy. Maybe not everyone is our friend or maybe we don’t do well in school. Or if we do well in school, maybe we don’t excel in other areas. Every one of us has distinct talents and we can’t win at everything. That’s especially true as adults. Adults have many serious responsibilities and don’t get trophies for getting through the day at work, taking care of kids, or paying the rent. For adults, also, loss can be more serious. It might mean not getting a job you wanted, or worse, it might even mean losing someone you love.

Ultimately, I think that children should know what winning really feels like, before our society drowns in meaningless, unnecessary awards. After reading this article, I am thinking seriously about what winning even means. To all of us the definition is different. Sometimes, winning is not about being the best at something at all, but continuing to try your best, whether you get that trophy or not.