

The Lynden School of Dance

My Daughter, The Dancer

Well, let me tell you before I begin, that yes, my daughter just happens to be the most perfect daughter in the world. She's gorgeous, talented, sweet spirited, smart, and ambitious; all of the qualities a mum loves in her offspring and she's a dancer!

Oh, what a rewarding job you have as a mum to a dancer. When you see her standing in the middle of the dance floor with her cute little outfit on, her tiny little figure, her ponytail bouncing, and her bubbly smile, your heart swells and you want to stand up and holler out, "Hey, that cute one in the middle is mine!" But, instead you just sit there with a smug smile.

Been there, done that!

Being the mum of a young lady that has won or earned a position on an elite dance team or squad really can be very rewarding, but it can also be very frustrating at times. You will find yourself thinking, "This is my baby and now some lady is trying to take over my role and spending a lot of time with her." She comes home from practice gushing over the advice that her coach gave her while dancing! Heck, didn't you just tell her the same things out on the back lawn two days ago? Yep, she has a new role model in life now.

But you will find out, it tends to be rather short-lived. All of a sudden, her coach is expecting really impossible things from her; like being on time to practice, smile all of the time, and doing moves that just look really ridiculous because someone else was chosen to be in the centre, and, horrors, she might even have to be a reserve for some routines!

Here are some tips on how to be the best dance mum ever:

Being a member of a good dance team requires practice and often, extra technique classes. Do what you can to encourage her to go the extra mile. Expect her to give 100% to the team. She earned the position, now she has to keep it! It's a privilege that she was even chosen at all!

Every sport has reserves or second squads. Why? Because not every member of the team is perfect. Very seldom do you find a perfect dancer in all elements of dance on a team. Are the girls on these secondary squads because they lack specific skills or is it because they lack desire and ambition to do their best? If your daughter has been

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chosen as a reserve, maybe there is an underlying reason. It's not always a bad thing either. Occasionally, younger girls need to grow into their positions as a strong dancer and as a leader for her teammates.

This is a team and what is best for the team should take precedence over individual wants. In most sports, if you are an older member on a team you have the opportunity to be showcased because you are the strongest member. The same goes for dancing. As in life, your daughter will have to work her way up the ladder and earn her own recognition. You cannot do it for her. Discourage prima-Donna-like behavior. She's learning skills that will help her for the rest of her life, and it's not just the dancing skills. It's the inter-action with others and being a part of a team.

Be involved, but the coach is being paid to do her job and she knows what she is doing, so let her do it! Mums can be invaluable to a coach by helping take up some of the many duties that she can't possibly do. Volunteer and tell the coach what you are good at doing, ie. sewing, making flyers, organizing, fundraising ideas, etc. And then let her do the asking when she needs help.

Complaints, problems, issues:

This is a squad of young ladies. There are so many outside factors that come into play. School, boys, maturity, peer pressure, etc. Don't always jump to conclusions and make assumptions when your daughter is upset about something. Usually a good night's sleep with a few tears will end the situation. Sometimes just talking about it helps. Mum, try not to take sides against other team members or squads. That is the hardest thing in the world to do. But, your daughter won't always be in the right. It's best to let your daughter fight her own battles. And, generally it isn't a real battle and the situation will correct itself.

Many times it's best to ignore the issue. Or, even better, write a letter to the person you think has wronged your daughter. Blast that person good! Read it, put it away, read again three days later, laugh, and then throw it away! Step back and look at each situation objectively. It's hard to sit on your hands, but it's often the best thing to do.

Don't gossip with other parents. If you have an issue, take it to the coach. And, don't encourage your daughter to gossip or complain to

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other team members. On the other hand, make friends with the other parents as you will be spending some very long days together. If you really feel the need to speak to the coach about an issue make sure you have your facts straight. Don't do it in an accusatory manner or in front of others and make sure you take the time to listen to what the coach has to say. She often has good reasons for her decisions. After all, she wants your daughter and her team to succeed as much as you do.

Enjoy your time spent with your daughter during her dancing years. Use your time wisely while driving back and forth to the studio or competitions. Get to know her. This will make it so easy for her to talk to you when she has life issues and she will know that she can turn to you for objective and loving counsel. Loving your daughter and being proud of her accomplishments are what you do best!

Remember, you're not raising a dancer, you're raising a daughter.

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