

IMPORTANT IDEAS TO REMEMBER IN YOUR ROLE AS A SUZUKI PARENT

by Teri Einfeldt



1. Dr. Suzuki always said “character first, ability second.”

The Suzuki experience is about your child first, playing the instrument second. Watch how your child learns, nurturing your child’s spirit and building her self confidence, yet instilling a sense of achieving excellence at every level.

2. No one enjoys doing something they do not do well.

It is important for the teacher and the parent to work together to provide the motivation for the child to reach a level where she is capable of appreciating her progress. It is normal for the motivation level to shift back and forth between the parent and the child.

3. There are going to be good practices and there are going to be bad practices.

If your child is not happy about practicing on a given day, it generally has nothing to do with the instrument. It may be the first thing they have been asked to do on a daily basis that involves “homework.” They may have had a bad day at school. They may be reacting to something you did earlier. My advice is always try to end the practice before it starts to deteriorate.

4. Practice makes permanent, not perfect.

Repetitions done incorrectly or without reaching the desired goal your teacher desires are counterproductive.

5. Be consistent and try to practice only on the days you eat.

Each day you skip makes the next time you practice more difficult. Shorter, focused, and consistent practices in which goals are well defined work best.

6. The three most important components of this method are parent involvement, listening, and reviewing with a purpose.

Remembering that the Suzuki Method is based on the concept of language learning, it is important for you to remember your involvement with your child while learning to talk. Ear training, repetitions, and cumulative vocabulary words were of the utmost importance.

7. Our ultimate goal is for the child to experience intrinsic motivation as well as eventual independence.

It is really important to involve the child as opposed to just tell or teach him. I would not recommend this from the very beginning, but soon after, try and gradually involve him in the assessment/learning process. Help to train his ear to recognize the differences between that which is good and that which is undesirable. Stickers and rewards

are extrinsic motivators, which should be used sparingly.

8. Learning the notes (and bowings) to the newest piece is not as important as strengthening the child’s technical foundation through review.

If you learned an instrument as a child via the traditional method, more than likely you had many books you carried to your lesson that contained etudes. We use review pieces as etudes to reinforce technical and musical concepts much the same as the traditional methods use etudes.

9. Music lessons and practices in general are filled with life lessons.

Allowing your child to quit or change instruments during the early stages is sending the wrong message. There will be other difficult things in life and we need to learn how to cope with the challenges and embrace the concept of working step by step to achieve a goal. Here we are identifying a problem or a goal, breaking it down into small, achievable steps, repeating the tasks many times, and celebrating each small accomplishment.

10. Never have your child play his newest piece at a solo concert or master class.

High stress situations for the





children need to be handled with playing a piece they are confident with playing. It is important to remember the entire world does not know the order of the pieces. This is not the time to have the children demonstrate how far along they are in the books.

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11. Allow your teacher to control the lesson unless your opinion is invited.

Hearing more than one voice in the lesson is confusing to the child. As the home assistant, your job is to understand the assignment in three ways:

- a. How it is to be done
- b. How many times it is to be done with what outcome
- c. The results to look for that match your teacher's concept of excellence.

12. Communication with your teacher is imperative.

If you feel uncomfortable or troubled by anything that is happening along your Suzuki journey please take the time to discuss it with your teacher. Often times discussing something when it first starts to bother you will bring a more satisfactory resolution to the problem. It is always better to discuss something about your child with the teacher when the child is not present.

13. Never compare your child to someone else.

We are working towards bringing out the best in each child, and having them work towards reaching their own fullest potential. This is one of the least motivating things you can do to your child and has a deep-seated, lasting effect.

14. Do only what the teacher asks. Do not go ahead.

There is always a reason your teacher does not move ahead. We are more focused on teaching your child to play her chosen instrument well, than what piece she is playing. It is how well she plays the instrument that will be most fulfilling, as she becomes a member of a small and larger ensemble. This in turn will instill an even greater sense of self-confidence within each child.

15. Enjoy each step of the journey. Do not focus on the destination.

Small successes should be celebrated at every turn. All the small steps lead to accomplishment of the larger goal. ❧

