

WHAT EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE SUZUKI METHOD

The Nine Things You Need to Know to Be a Stellar Suzuki Parent

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YOU ARE THE PRACTICE HELPER AT HOME.

Let's put this out there. No one always likes to practice.

I'm a professional violinist. I have fancy degrees, and have studied with world-renowned teachers. I don't always like to practice. Your child won't always love it either. And that is ok.

Your job as the Suzuki parent is to facilitate consistent practice, and do what you can to make it fun. Play games. Set up reward systems. Do what you gotta do, my friend. Some days are hard, some days are easier, but the more consistent you are, the fewer fights you will have. It's like brushing your teeth. You just do it. Every day.

YOU ARE THE SECRETARY IN LESSONS.

In lessons, take a back seat. This is the place for your child to shine. Let them answer questions and take responsibility. Then when they are posed with challenges, let them struggle to figure things out.

Try not to rescue when they forget the answers or do things incorrectly. Take notes and/or videos so you can help them at home. Sit back and enjoy watching your child grow and blossom.

YOU WILL GET BORED.

The Suzuki Method is often called the Mother-Tongue approach. The idea is that children can learn music just like they learned to talk. When they learned to speak, they repeated words over and over. They added new words, and continued saying the old ones. So, they aren't going to learn a song and then let it languish while they move to others.

Daily review and repetition are required to become proficient. Why bother becoming proficient? So they can be confident and actually enjoy playing. (If they sound bad, they know it.) The parents often get sick of a song long before the child does. I mean, seriously, how many times have you seen Frozen? I rest my case.

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YOU WILL GET REALLY BORED.

Remember that Mother-Tongue stuff I was talking about? For months, your child listened to you speak. He (or she) watched your mouth moving, and he mimicked your inflections.

So here is the connection...your kid will be listening to the Suzuki cd every day. The more the better. The more listening they do, the faster they will progress. And more progress leads to more confidence, which leads to more fun.

YOU WILL NEED TO SUSPEND YOUR JUDGEMENT.

When your child learned to speak, did you constantly correct their mistakes? No. You probably delighted in them. I know that I did with my little guy. I am still sad he no longer says "bundo" instead of "pillow." (Not sure how he made that leap.)

Although you will be very aware of mistakes, shower your child with praise for the things he is doing right. Try not to be embarrassed or upset when they falter, it's not a reflection on you, but a natural part of the process of learning a very difficult skill. Do whatever you can to make practice a loving, enjoyable process, correcting only one thing at a time, and intentionally praising at every opportunity.

I think these are the most important things you need to know to really help your child be successful. Some other significant aspects of the Suzuki method are:

Early beginning:

The younger a child is, the easier it is to develop some of the muscles necessary to play. Five or six years old is ideal, but it is never too late. Older beginners often progress very quickly due to their increased ability to focus.

Group lessons:

Performing with and for other children is hugely motivating, and just plain fun. Attendance at group lessons is so important. I mean, seriously, I can't even tell you. Everything is easier if they come to group lesson. And I make the group lessons crazy fun.

Graded Repertoire:

The pieces in the Suzuki Books gradually increase in difficulty, and build upon the previous pieces. Don't rush your teacher. If they are waiting to introduce the next piece, it is because they are trying to prepare your child for a new challenge. If it comes too quickly, the kids get frustrated when they are unable to master the new concept. Be patient.

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Every Child Can:

Musical ability is not something that you are born with. It is a skill to be honed and developed. French children speak beautiful French. Chinese children speak fluent Chinese. If you create a safe environment for learning and experimentation, your child can learn to play the violin.

Delayed Note reading:

Playing the violin is a very physical activity. The motion of the bow, and movement of the fingers on both hands is quite complex, and a lot to think about. Waiting to teach music reading allows your student to become comfortable with the basics without having to worry about notes and rhythms at the same time.

I hope I haven't scared you. This is an incredible journey you've begun. The skills your child will learn from playing the violin will translate into every other aspect of his life. Learning a musical instrument teaches discipline, a love of beauty, respect, hard work, problem-solving skills, math and spatial reasoning, empathy, and so much more.

And if you commit to this, you will be teaching your child the one of the most valuable life skills that you can:

Don't quit when things get hard. Do the work even when you don't want to. If you do, you will reap the rewards a thousand times over.

You are amazing. And you can do this. Think of your practice time as a special time for you and your child to grow closer together in love and work.

It doesn't matter if they become amazing musicians, or concert violinists.

The goal here is to teach them the life skills that they will need to be successful and happy adults.

As Dr. Suzuki said,

"What is man's ultimate direction in life? It is to search for love, truth, virtue, and beauty."