

# Miss Katie's Kids Korner

## Be Your Child's Biggest Fan!

by Katie Taylor

There is a commercial running right now that shows hundreds of people standing outside a school waving and cheering a middle-school-aged boy as he walks through the entrance. Did he save a drowning baby? No. He got a good grade on his math test. While the commercial might be a bit overboard, it gets the point across – children need your support, in everything they do.

The truth is that anyone can stand on the sidelines and cheer, but it takes courage and discipline (yours) to be your children's head cheerleader.

Situation: A trip to the circus with your family. It has been discussed and agreed that each child will be able to have one treat while watching the circus. Once that treat is bought and consumed, there are no more treats. If anyone whines or complains, he will be escorted back to the car where he will wait until the performance is over. Your 6-year-old son wants a hot dog. His 4-year-old sister sees his hot dog and says she wants one, too. You remind her that if she gets that hot dog, she won't be able to get anything else. Two seconds later she assures you that a hot dog is what she wants. A short while after hot dog consumption, she sees a little girl two

rows back with cotton candy. You feel a tug at your arm. "No, I'm sorry, but you already had a hot dog." Her faces gets red, tears well up and then the ear piercing "I WANT SOME COTTON CANDY!!!" Your choice is to: a.) Look around pretending you've never seen this screaming child; b.) Give in and buy cotton candy, or c.) Very calmly carry your daughter out to the car where you stay with her as the rest of your family enjoys the circus. If you answered C you are correct. Bonus points for praising your son for his self-restraint.

Here's another example of the importance of praise: curfew. You tell your sixteen-year-old daughter she must be in by midnight. It's Saturday night and she is out with her friends. 11:30 rolls around, and she says "I've got to get home by 12." Her friends call her a baby and other names, but, like Cinderella, she makes it home by midnight. You are there waiting for her with praise and a cup of hot chocolate. However, if you are not there to meet her, you have fallen down on your part of the bargain. Without your positive feedback for her good behavior, not only did she suffer ridicule from her all important peer group, but you didn't care enough to notice. The next time she goes out with her friends and 11:30 rolls around, it's a safe bet she won't be home by 12.

Timing is the final element of good parenting. The time to intervene

is before things happen. With the little girl at the circus, the rules were set before she went into the circus; she knew she would have to sit in the car if she asked for another treat. Although you had to miss the show as well, the time to intervene was at the first wail. In the case of the midnight curfew, your teenager needs to have you waiting at the front door. If you have to set an alarm or leave your own activity early, you need to be there to praise or at least acknowledge her good behavior.

Children want to know their limits. They want to know what is expected of them and what they have to do in order to get your praise. Their job, however, is to push, stretch and poke at those limits any way they can. Your job is to establish and maintain those limits. It's not easy to be your child's head cheerleader, but the rewards far outweigh the struggle. Have faith, courage, and a sense of humor and send them out onto the playing field with the knowledge that you are behind them every step of the way.

(Miss Katie teaches *Kindermusik* at the Christ Lutheran Church in Ellenville. There is ongoing registration for fall classes through the month of October. Call 647-7291 for a free trial class.)

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