

*Dear Beginning Parent,*

*I have sat in your chair, for I have twice been a beginning Suzuki parent. Now that I've put in a little more time at lessons and practice, my perspective has changed a bit. While being a more experienced Suzuki parent has not changed my initial response to what my child is doing, it HAS caused major changes in my expectations and what I do with my reactions. (Usually!)*

*If your child is like every other child I've ever known, he or she will definitely learn to play the chosen instrument. Along the way, he will most certainly do one or more of the following:*

- Lie down on the floor when everyone else is standing up.*
- Stand up when everyone else is lying down.*
- Declare she hates the violin (and/or you)!*
- Drop her violin on its bridge or other delicate part.*
- Have an attention span of 5 to 10 seconds.*
- Deliberately do things "backwards."*
- Interrupt a lesson with a rambling discourse—definitely not on music!*
- Seem more interested in the mechanics of the instrument than in playing it.*
- Feel more sleepy, hungry, angry, or lazy than he does musical.*
- Resist and test your ideas about habit building, especially about practice.*
- Get to a lesson and do absolutely nothing he worked on at home.*
- Make pronouncements to the teacher regarding your practice or lack of, listening or lack of, family problems and secrets, etc.*



*It's funny; I can appreciate these actions and reactions in the other kids in the class. As a matter of fact, I think they're cute and funny and that the kids are making terrific progress. With my own kids, I want to bite my tongue, hide my face, duck my head or maybe YELL! However, over the years I am learning that my kids sense it when I feel that way, and they become nervous and less confident. What they need most from me is:*

- My interest. I'm here; I care.*
- My faith. I believe he or she can learn to play the violin, cello, piano.*
- My enthusiasm. This is a neat thing to do.*
- My respect. For him—his very real efforts, his concentration, his personhood. For his teacher—her ideas, advice, interest, ability, training.*
- My enjoyment of every step along the way.*
- My acceptance. Indicated by a pleasant expression on my face at lessons, class and practice.*
- My praise of every small success.*

*This is the habit-building I'm still working on every day. My expectations for my children are high because I want so much for them, but my image of myself is also involved. I want the teacher and other parents to see me as a good, effective parent. I try to remember that our teacher sees my child working very hard and is appreciating his efforts—not criticizing him or me. Our teacher has worked with many children, and she is not bothered by behavior she has seen many times before. So I try to restrain my motherly sigh and roll of the eyes.*

*My goal for this year is to relax—and try to enjoy my own child as much as I'll enjoy yours. I hope this will be your goal, too. Welcome!*

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