

# The “Do Unto Others” Rule....

by Sally Canterna - Friday, September 23, 2005

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Sometimes the voice of your conscience has a name. For the years that I was growing up and forming values, mine was mom. She had little anecdotes for everything that had been passed down from her mother. They imbedded themselves in my character and took root. When they rang out in my head, they rang out in her voice. You never outgrow those early years of parental brainwashing. To this day, I am thankful for mine.

Mom strongly preached the “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you” rule. She meant it and she enforced it. I was always made to reverse a situation and ask myself, how I would feel if this happened to me? My response would always be more positive and sensitive when I took this approach. It became one of my rules to live by.

Oftentimes my sister and I had to be good whether we wanted to or not. We lived under the constant threat of being sent to live with the nuns (we attended Catholic School) or dragged to face-to-face confession to the scariest priest in the parish. There’s no doubt in my mind that fear had a firm grip on my formative years. But in retrospect, it worked well and I’m no worse for the wear.

It is so easy to get caught up in negativity, especially at a dance studio. However wonderful a studio may be, there is always an undercurrent that you can get swept away in if you’re not careful. Anyone who denies this is not being truthful to themselves or anyone else. Just because the threat exists, it doesn’t mean it has to be a part of your life. We all have a choice. When we choose our actions, we should expect a consequence. However, when our actions affect our children, we should think twice.

It all starts in the home. How often do you hear that? Usually anything you hear that much has a substantial amount of validity. There is no greater role model to a child, no one they would rather please or be praised by than a parent. That alone should speak volumes. Lessons in tolerance, respect, jealousy, support, and other issues that crop up at the studio should all be addressed first by the parents. If a child sees their parent being genuinely happy for the good fortune of others at the studio, they won’t even question that it’s the right thing to do. Parental example is the most valuable example of all.

One of my main goals for all young dancers is for them to be able to be genuinely happy for the success of their friends. Too often they somehow feel diminished or defeated by it. The value of a friend far exceeds the value of a trophy or a top score. Of all the sources of negativity in a studio, I would have to put jealousy at the top of the list. I don’t even think half the time that it’s intentional. It’s just an ugly part of human nature.

When 30 girls are competing for title, doesn’t each girl want it as badly as the next? Would your daughter be any happier than someone else’s daughter if she won? I think not. Would she be any more devastated if she lost than someone else would? She shouldn’t be. In the big picture, we are all the same with the same wants and needs.

If only our young people could see how special each one is in their own right. They may not be the ones who sweep everything at a competition, they may instead be the ones never give up. They may not be the ones front and center, but rather on the end in the back row. Those students who spend countless hours a week at the studio are like pieces of a puzzle, each contributing something unique and special. With just one piece missing, the puzzle is incomplete. While together, it is a work of art.

We just finished with Nutcracker auditions here at the studio. While visions of Clara and Sugarplums are dancing in most of the girl’s heads, there are so many other roles to be dealt out. They may not be as glamorous or coveted, but equally as important to our overall success. What about the beautiful little girls who don a cap and knickers to dance as a boy in the party scene? Bravo to them! Just as the pieces of a puzzle, they add to the “wholeness” of the production.

Many of us celebrate our birthday each year surrounded by family and good friends. Celebrations are not solo events, they are inclusive. A party of one is not a party at all. When something wonderful happens to you, doesn’t it feel great when your

friends are there to share your happiness? Remember that when the shoe is on the other foot. When it's not your time to shine, be content to bask in the light of someone else. I sincerely believe that good things come to those who wait.

Just as negativity is contagious, so is a positive attitude. Both spread like the flu. So...if you're going to be a carrier anyway, carry the cure - not the sickness.