

ANN ARBOR SUZUKI INSTITUTE OF MUSIC



NEWSLETTER September 2014

www.annarborsuzuki.org

734.726.0171

The commitment of the Ann Arbor Suzuki Institute is to the most fundamental principles of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, that talent is not inborn, but can be developed. We believe that every child can learn, and we are free from all discrimination. We are a non profit 501(c) (3) organization which endeavors to educate parents and children in the Suzuki philosophy, using music to enrich their lives and the community. In this way, we help create a better world.

The most Constructive Ways to Give Criticism

Shannon Jansma

Every child needs guidance from time to time, but it's important to try not to anger or embarrass them while giving it. Even when criticism seems constructive, it may still cause your child to lash out, blame others, or withdraw. Although you can't always predict what will set your child off, there are a few ways to make criticism easier to take.

Emphasize positive behaviors before mentioning the negative ones. It's easier for children to accept your comments if they don't seem as harsh. Sometimes, this idea is called a "praise sandwich". A praise sandwich would look something like this: "I really liked how you stayed focused in your lesson today. I noticed that you were a little reluctant to do what the teacher asked. If you do things right away next time, the lesson will be even better!"

Another good option is to allow your child a chance to explain their frustrations, and then offer a better way to handle the situation next time. For example, "I really liked how focused you were at the beginning of practicing, but I noticed that when we started working on your new piece, you kept changing the subject and chatting. Why do you think that happened?" This helps your child feel like you're on their side rather than opposing them. Make sure to offer a more constructive way to handle these feelings the next time they occur.

Sometimes, your child may not be aware that their behavior did not meet expectations until you mention it. Be careful to frame this as an opportunity for improvement rather than just pointing out a deficit. Saying "Did you realize that asking non-musical questions in lessons makes it harder to get things done?" rather than a direct criticism allows the child to learn from their mistakes without feeling inadequate. This distinction is important because research shows that children who are criticized too directly are more likely to feel helpless or act out compared to children whose strategies or actions are criticized (Dweck and Leggett, 1988).

The timing of criticism is also very important. It's vital to let a child know right away when their behavior is inappropriate for the situation. This helps your child remember the details of the situation and the emotions they felt which caused the unsuitable response. If you wait to mention the issue, it will be more

difficult for your child to recall the details, and therefore harder for them to identify a similar situation later on.

Criticism is a tricky subject. On one hand, parents don't want to be too lenient on their children, but on the other, parents want to avoid conflict. Using these strategies will help your child see criticism as a learning opportunity rather than a failure. It's important to make sure that your child understands that criticism's true purpose is to help him or her learn about their strengths and weaknesses so they can grow and improve.

Sources:

Dweck, C. S, and Leggett, E. L. "A Social-Cognitive Approach to Motivation and Personality". 1988, American Psychological Association Inc.

Crouch, Michelle. "Critical Acclaim: Help Your CHILD Learn from Constructive Criticism".
<http://www.parents.com/kids/development/social/child-constructive-criticism/>

Spivey, Becky L. "Using Constructive Criticism to Help Children Learn at Home".
http://www.handyhandouts.com/viewHandout.aspx?hh_number=340&nfp_title=Using+Constructive+Criticism+to+Help+Children+Learn+at+Home

Instruments for Sale

1/2-size Otto Ernst Fischer violin made in 1986. Case and bow included. Price is \$325. Contact Wendy Frisch, (734)995-8656 or wendyf@umich.edu.



16" Eastman Haffner Viola made in 2009. Case and bow included. Bow is freshly rehaired, and instrument was looked over by Scott Tribby. Price is \$800, payment plans are possible. Contact Scott Grover, (269)626-4417 or kazoo.grover@gmail.com.

Got an instrument for sale, and want it listed in next month's newsletter? Email Shannon Jansma at shannonviolin@gmail.com

Ann Arbor Suzuki Institute Faculty-Sharing Both Joy and Talent

Violin: Katherine Almquist, Wendy Azrak, Judy Blank, Kevin Horne, Shannon Jansma, Rebecca Kaltz, Deborah Stanton, Anna Weller **Viola:** Katherine Almquist, Wendy Azrak **Cello:** Alice Greminger, Andrea Yun **Bass:** Derek Weller **Guitar:** Terry Farmer, MaryLou Roberts, Ryan Seay

For more information on the Suzuki Method, visit: www.suzukiassociation.org