



PARENTS

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ADVICE TO CHEER

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As parents, we all want the very best for our children, and maybe sometimes that is a weakness. As parents of athletes, it is just that weakness that makes us do some very radical things at times. In competitive cheerleading, as in any other competitive sport, there are parents out there who gossip or push their kids too hard, and they just don't realize the damage they cause. The main reason we should be encouraging our children to get involved in cheerleading is for our children to have fun while learning life's lessons. Here is a bit of advice to parents of new cheerleaders (or any other competitive sport for that matter)...

**1. Never gossip about anyone, not a parent, not a team member, not a coach, not a rival, not anyone.** If you do this, more people than you know will hear about it, and more than you know will be said about you.

**2. Never criticize a coach's decision.** That coach is there to coach; that is what he or she has been trained and conditioned to do. Even if you were a national champion cheerleader in high school, chances are that the coach has already considered other options and yours are not going to matter if you are walking around the gym babbling about how stupid it was to put so and so as a flyer and not your child. If you are experienced and good at cheerleading, ask to volunteer to help your squad out. Suggestions are always helpful, but mouthing off about it to all the parents isn't going to get you very far.

**3. Never try to take over something you are not in charge of.** For example, a parent works so hard on arranging a fundraiser, and another parent comes in and takes all of the credit. This is not appropriate parent behavior.

**4. If your child isn't complaining, then you shouldn't be.** Cheerleading is a very demanding sport, financially, mentally, and physically. Remember that although they are exhausted and upset about something that happened at practice, most likely they don't want to quit the team because of it. This is hard work... keep that in mind.

**5. Make sure that it's your child's idea to cheer, not yours.** So many girls have been pushed into this sport at an early age, not because they wanted to, but because their parents were on a squad or wanted to be on a squad, or a friend's child is on a squad. The decision is one that is ultimately the parents, since they are financing the venture and doing fundraising, but it is the child who has to have the desire to excel at the sport.

Finally, remember to **support the team, its coach, and its supporters.** After all, in all sports you will be exposed to parents who do not adhere to these suggestions, but if a team doesn't stick behind its coach, it will be doomed to failure.

*Shelby C. Elmore*

*Bio: Shelby Elmore has been active in various youth sports leagues with her three sons, Matthew, Andrew, and Jacob. Jacob cheered for the Southaven Wildcat All-Stars for five years.*

