

IT TAKES A STAGE MOM TO KNOW ONE

Hey Deb,

My eight-year-old daughter recently auditioned for a ballet recital. I kissed her on the cheek, said, "Do your best," and sent her into the studio. It was then that I noticed other moms coaching their daughters' right up to the last second: "Make mommy proud, Remember what we practiced at home, Keep your head up, When you do your pirouette, don't forget to spot and remember what Grandma promised you." My daughter was not selected for the recital solo. She was clearly upset. Now I wonder if I should have been more involved. What's the difference between being a stage mom and being a proactive parent?
Signed A Mom Behind the Scenes

Dear Mom Behind the Scenes,

A few weeks ago my eight-year-old daughter auditioned for a solo in her children's choir. It was only a few bars of a song and since my daughter is an excellent singer, I expected her to ace it. Unlike your audition, I happened to be in the room. Also unlike your audition, I didn't know about it beforehand. Otherwise I would have had her practice a few times by singing for her father, her siblings, her grandparents, her aunts, uncles, cousins - both first and second, her dog, her stuffed animal, Boo-Boo and the UPS man. However, knowing that my daughter is one day destined to be the next American Idol, which is why I make her watch it with me every week, even if she begs to play with her Barbies instead, I sat smugly as the other children auditioned. I knew my daughter would sing louder and with more confidence, because that's how she sings in the car, the shower and all throughout the house on a daily basis. But just to be sure, whenever I caught her eye, I mouthed the word "LOUDER!" and sent hand signals of encouragement right up until the last possible second when the music teacher suggested I wait outside. It seems the hand signals were distracting the other singers. I said, "What other singers?"

As I stood outside the door, I left it open just a crack and waited for my daughter's angelic voice to fill the music room. I waited and waited and waited. Finally a familiar voice reached my ears and yet, I could barely hear it. My soon-to-be Idol sang in a slightly-above-a-whisper, shaky vibrato. As Randy would say, "It was pitchy in parts. It was just okay for me, dude." Paula would've said, "You're still one of my favorites and I like your shirt." Simon would have said, "Jenna, you sounded like a scared little eight-year-old! I guarantee you'll be out before the next vote."

When class ended, my daughter and her friend jumped in the car as playful and happy as two puppies and begging for a fast-food lunch on the way home. She was obviously feeling fine with her audition, but I just couldn't let it go. I said, "I just have one question. Who was that shy girl who sang so soft that I could barely hear her? You know you can sing better than that?" I wanted to say so much more, but my daughter's crying filled the entire car and drowned out my caring, constructive criticism. It took my sweet daughter's tears to finally see the insanity I had created.

You were being a pro-active parent. I was being a stage mom. As Randy would say, "I give you props."