



How to Include Your Spouse (and Grandparents!) in the Suzuki Music Journey

by [Lisa Deakins](#)

You and your child have had lots of training in the Suzuki philosophy and methods. As a Suzuki parent, you have probably attended parent sessions, learned basic techniques on your child's instrument, and read articles about Suzuki education. You have attended weekly lessons with your child, observed and participated in group classes, and received ongoing support and encouragement from your child's teacher. Being fully immersed in the Suzuki experience has helped you understand that it is the best method for your child's music education.

But what about your spouse? Have they been to the parent classes? Attended group lessons? Read extensive materials about Suzuki and its benefits? Learned to play on your child's instrument? Although your partner may have picked up on a few aspects of the philosophy here and there, chances are that they have probably not had the experiences you have had. It can be hard to understand the struggles and challenges of learning an instrument without having the proper background, and a spouse who is not fully educated and invested in the philosophy may suggest "throwing in the towel" when the process gets hard. Grandparents who see "tidbits" of violin practice at home may also have similar thoughts. The following strategies will help to include and inform your spouse and the other adults in your life in the Suzuki music journey:



Lisa's son and his grandmother after they completed a great violin practice.

Lesson Attendance

Invite your spouse to attend a private lesson with you and your child. Before attending, educate your partner on proper lesson etiquette, such as observing without speaking and smiling/clapping when appropriate. Be sure to attend the lesson together as a team so you can discuss your observations later. Do not send a substitute parent, as this disrupts the student's progression.

Listening

Explain the importance of listening to your spouse and put all required listening playlists on their phone. Ask your partner to play the music on weekends or at other times when you may not be available. What a relief to know that your child is still listening, so you can check that off your list!

As adults, when listening repeatedly to the same music, it is easy to think, "This again?" Be sure your partner and your child's grandparents understand that repetition is the key to success, and we must not make comments that discourage our children's listening habits. Suggest starting the music without making a comment at all while children are doing other things, like playing with toys or riding in the car.

Performance Attendance

When possible, be sure your spouse and other important adults in your family attend performances. Their attendance demonstrates that the Suzuki music journey is a family event where everyone cheers and celebrates musical accomplishments together. Always remind those who are not familiar with the Suzuki philosophy that positive comments should be the focus of after-concert discussions with the child.

Household Balance

While practicing with your child is not a chore, it can sometimes feel like another item on your to-do list. Ensure that your spouse understands the responsibilities that come with practice and ask them to help with other home-related responsibilities while you facilitate practice each day. Doing the dishes, reading to a sibling, overseeing bath time, and preparing dinner are all things that your spouse can do to help make your child's daily practice more manageable for you.

In our family, we always practice in a common area so that my husband can hear and be included in practice while making dinner, clearing plates, etc. He feels like part of the team and compliments our son on things he likes. Because he is educated in the Suzuki philosophy, my husband avoids negative comments and also understands when our son may become frustrated over a certain technique or musical passage.

Travel

When planning to go out of town, ask your spouse/grandparent to observe one of your home practices and give them a "tutorial" on how to facilitate practice while you are gone. Make a concise list of pieces that need to be played for the practice with one thing to think about for each piece. Ask the adult to make a video of their child's favorite piece to send to you so that you can celebrate a great practice together!

If your child is anything like my seven-year-old son, he tends to "forget" how some of the pieces go when he practices with someone else. Be sure your practice substitute has access to the reference recordings to trigger the student's memory of the pieces he can't remember.

Advanced Group

One of the things that inspires me the most as a parent of a young Suzuki student is hearing older, more advanced students perform in group classes. Ask your teacher if you and your spouse (or grandparent) can attend a higher-level group class to see what is in store for your child(ren) in the future. This is highly motivating for all the adults in your family!

While hearing advanced students perform in concerts is inspirational, it can be even more encouraging to attend a weekly class and witness students who are working on technique, playing ensemble pieces, and having fun together in a relaxed atmosphere.

Reflection

Reflect on home practices privately with your spouse. Has your spouse ever observed a home practice that didn't go as you had planned and then suggested quitting? Explain to them that children do not love every minute of practice every day, and that sometimes students get frustrated when trying new techniques. The frustration that a spouse sees is only a very small part of the Suzuki music journey, and observing these frustrating moments should not influence a family's decision to stop lessons. While it shouldn't be an everyday occurrence, sometimes students get discouraged when trying new and different techniques during practice with you, the practice partner. Don't let your spouse or the child's grandparents become influenced by these moments alone.

Use the above strategies before these thoughts occur to inform and educate your family about the Suzuki music philosophy. Your spouse and your child's grandparents will understand that these things happen, and as a team, you will continue to encourage and motivate your child on this special musical journey. 🎻



Lisa's son making a video to send to her while she was out of town.

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Lisa's students study classical playing as well as various fiddle styles, and she has arranged a series of music books for Suzuki violinists called "Fiddlin' Favorites," licensed by the International Suzuki Association. When Lisa is not teaching, you can find her performing throughout the southeast or strolling the streets of Charleston with her husband and son. For more information, visit www.lisadeakins.com.

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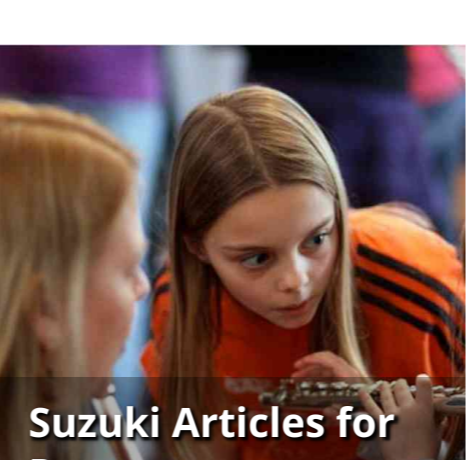
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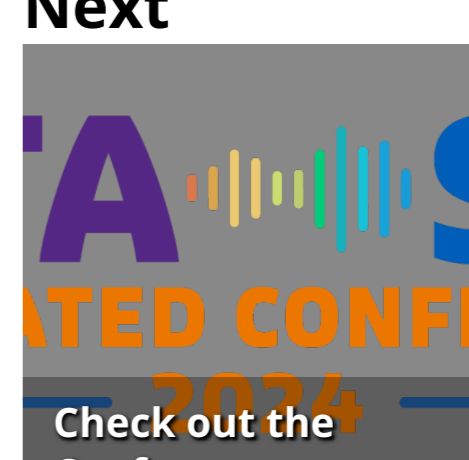
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