

When a Member Quits the Team

...from a Director's perspective

**by Joyce E. Pennington
President, CEO of American Dance/Drill Team**

When a team member quits the team, it can be either a traumatic experience for the director or a relief. Many times, as a director/coach, we equate ourselves as a surrogate parent. When the student fails, we have somehow failed as their leader and mentor. We feel that we are the ultimate guide to provide a positive learning experience for each and every student. We feel that we are the most effective disciplinarian as well as the best at keeping the motivation alive within our team.

However, we must stop and understand that each and every student is an individual with individual backgrounds and home life. Each one has a different configuration of environment that may effect them in a unique way that will be very different from others. Understanding that, we must know that we cannot persecute ourselves for failure if a student does not succeed in our eyes.

Whenever a student would approach me about quitting, after asking "why" and counseling for a few minutes, I would ask if they would give themselves a few days to think it through before making this drastic of a decision. This would ensure that the decision would be well thought out. I would then contact the parents to see if there was outside information that would prove to be instrumental in handling the situation. I would always remind them that the decision to quit has no "kings ex." Once they quit, the only way they could become a part of the team again would be to go through tryouts again and prove that they could earn their position again on the team.

Once they had made a final decision, I would ask to have their "resignation" in writing. This is a documentation for you in case you are challenged. Plus, it will be important for the student to be able to truly think, once again, about their actions when they must put their feelings into words.

Before they are allowed to be dismissed 'officially', ask that they return all pieces of uniforms and school property along with any money owed for fund-raisers or costumes. Make sure that if they do not return all items, you inform the counselor's office at school so they can put a hold on their grades or diploma.

Document any student or parent conferences to note what was said. Never allow your emotions to get the best of your decision making. Many times, the quitting member can create an emotional uproar with you and your team. Be the one that stays calm and never say anything that you will regret either to the student nor the parents involved. If you feel that a conference is going to be confrontational, ask that an administrator be present. If you feel that emotions are riding high during a conference, ask that you dismiss the conference and reschedule at a time when everyone has had a chance to "simmer down." You can be the mediator to keep your team and the resigning student in line.

After the process is over, never carry a guilt trip over a quitting member. There is always a reason for everything. Even if the member is a leader or valuable performer, the team will likely always be better off. When students are in a position where they do not want to carry out their responsibility, it is usually a detriment to the team.