



When a Dancer Quits the Team

By: Kathryn Guion

Kathryn Guion is a native of Knoxville, Tennessee and a current Middle Tennessee State University student. She is a Speech and Theatre major and the captain of the MTSU Lightning Dance Team. Kathryn is in her fourth year working for the Universal Dance Association.

For some dancers, the commitment involved in being a member of a dance team just becomes too much to handle. Team members are asked to give time, emotion, and physical effort to the team. Many dancers are more than willing to sacrifice in exchange for the infinite rewards of being on a dance team. However, if this is not what a dancer was expecting or if new circumstances arise, it can be very difficult to maintain this lifestyle. There are unlimited reasons as to why a dancer would quit the team, but regardless, you, the coach, must be ready to handle this difficult time. It is important to know how to behave toward your remaining team members and to the dancer who quit.

As a coach, your first duty is to your remaining team members. Depending on the circumstances of the situation, your dancers may be sad or angry that a fellow member has decided to quit. Let them know that you are there to support them. Allow your team time to discuss their feelings about the situation, but don't allow them to talk badly about or judge the dancer. No matter how well they know him or her, they may not know all of the reasons he or she quit the team.

Talk to your team about how they should behave at school toward their former teammate. They should, no matter the circumstances, be polite toward the dancer. If their former teammate is experiencing anything outside his or her control that forced her to quit, or is experiencing hardships of any kind, encourage your team to be supportive and to be a friend.

It is also important to talk to the dancer who quit. Ask him or her to give you specific reasons as to why he/she made this decision. A definitive reason will help your remaining team members to move on from the situation. No matter his or her reasoning for quitting and no matter whether you agree with the decision or not, always listen and offer any words of advice you have to this student.

You also have to think logistically. If there is a competition or performance coming up, it may be necessary to rearrange some formations and group work in a routine. While this may be stressful for everyone, encourage your team to refocus onto their routine rather than their former teammate. Also, the former dancer may be in possession of uniforms or other team items that belong to the team or school. They may also owe outstanding fees to the team. Try to talk to the dancer directly about these matters, and involve the parents if necessary.

While this can be a difficult time for any team, realize that no matter the circumstances, your team is full of resilient young adults. With your help, they can continue to have a very productive and successful season.