

What should I do when my tween wants to quit music lessons - Connected Families Podcast Episode #8

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SUMMARY

In this episode of the Connected Families podcast, hosts Stacy Bellward and Jim Jackson, along with guest Chad H, discuss the challenges parents face when their tweens express a desire to quit music lessons. They emphasize the importance of understanding the underlying reasons for a child's reluctance, maintaining a supportive relationship, and fostering a sense of responsibility without sacrificing connection.

- *Start with curiosity to understand why your child wants to quit their music lessons.*
- *It's essential to help children honor commitments while also allowing them to express their feelings.*
- *Parents should differentiate between their own desires for their child's success and the child's genuine interests.*
- *Establish clear expectations at the beginning of any commitment, such as music lessons, to facilitate accountability.*
- *Encourage open communication about struggles and provide support without resorting to power struggles.*
- *Explore creative solutions with your child, such as involving friends in performances to boost motivation.*
- *Maintain the relationship as a priority, even when navigating difficult conversations about responsibility and commitment.*
- *Recognize that not every child will excel in music, and it's important to support their unique talents and interests.*

[Music] welcome to the connected families podcast your listening Guide to Parenting with peace and connection I'm Stacy bellward here with co-founder of connected families Jim Jackson welcome everyone to the connected families podcast I'm Stacy I am here with Jim Jackson hey Jim hi Stacy how are you doing today I'm doing good fought a little traffic to get here but it's all good now we are all good we are in the middle of our t part series

that has the title of what should I do when we've covered all sorts of different topics we have more to come have only such as what should I do when my child won't calm down or what should I do when my child lies to me oh that was a big one yeah so what's today's question today's question is what should I do when my tween wants to quit their music lesson my tween wants to quit their music lesson I was a tween that

wanted to quit my music lessons Once Upon a Time yeah I used to play the flute what did you play Jim I played uh the piano first I was going to be a prodigy according to my mother and then the guitar y uh and but scales were too hard for me and learning the fundamentals and so I I moved on to using my voice I got voice lessons

and I can sing a scale with my voice quite

quite well I won't demonstrate that here today I've heard it it is nice and your three kids are all musicians is that right it's true so you've walked through this having kids in instrument lessons yeah well uh we love bringing in our other staff people from connected families to join us on these conversations and today we have Chad H he's here he is a licensed marriage and family therapist he coaches many people every single week

and so hi Chad welcome to the studio thank you so much glad to be here thanks for having me yeah we're glad to have you here too um because you do a lot of coaching with parents of twins and teens don't you I do yes that's kind of the The Sweet Spot for me so yeah this kind of falls under that category for sure yep you have a few teens in the house yeah you know I've got a couple uh

20-year-olds now and a 17-year-old and just a quick snapshot on my experience with music is I got booted out of the seventh grade marching band so uh anyway who are these people talking about this today exactly so anyway there's that's my quick uh foray into music oh that's go well today's topic is as I said before but it's what should I do when my tween wants to quit their music lesson and there's a lot of feeling around that

on you know all the different sides and it's a nuanced topic as really they all are because every family situation is different but we like to start our episodes our podcasts with a quick answer yeah I think uh starting with curiosity is a good place right so what's going on uh asking that question of why and what's happening and and maybe there's something underneath that that would make some sense around this I think the quick answer is that it's

really important to stick to your commitments uh to do the things that you've said that you're going to do and for us as parents to help our kids be successful in taking responsibility for the commitments that they've signed up for so so so fight that fight you've paid for it you've made a commitment to it uh I know it's hard I want to be with to support this is difficult um you know I I like that answer yeah

but I also recognize you know having talk to lots of parents that that that it can get really complicated really fast can't it it can and I think that that's where the Nuance comes in and that's where the relationship comes in uh that's where context comes in in terms of how did this get arranged in the first place um and so I think there are a lot of things to unpack there what do you mean how did it get arranged in

the first place don't all music I start because children think it's a good idea for them to do this and it will help them develop as humans and so they decide to get into music lessons isn't that how it always starts yes I mean their kids are passionate and they just bug their parents endlessly about I really want to sign up for the flute now now now right um I mean there are kids who do that aren't right right right right

but a lot of times uh it's a well this might be a good idea or we want to develop you and I've worked with lots of parents who believe it's a really important idea idea for their kids to get some musical training and I think it isn't

important there's a lot of research that would suggest that that's helpful for your brain and it's helpful for development yeah uh but how that gets into play is a pretty significant

uh issue yeah yeah and and didn't God wire some of our kids to be musicians and some of our kids to do something else yeah like get booted out of seventh grade band right I I'm I'm case in point for the other something else I think another way out right EX ex L yeah so Chad what are uh presumably you've dealt with this issue as you've coached parents or you've received some Communications from parents what's a

specific let's let's hone in because there are so many different variables here let's hone in on a specific sort of scenario or two that are that are different from each other and and sort of go through the nuances in each case yeah you know so I appreciate questions and we get lots of questions from people um uh about kind of what should I do and that's typically where parents start um they how do I get this Behavior to stop

or start or it usually is behavior focused but here's a question that we receive that I think is a is pretty typical maybe standard for for um wanting to quit music lessons and the the question uh and background says this my 10-year-old started flute lessons in September and has a real talent and made great progress but after Christmas decided she really didn't want to continue we are concerned at a pattern of starting things but not seeing them

through and we're unsure how much to insist and how much to allow choice we want her to learn responsibility yeah I feel for that parent that's kind of the main thing in all of this isn't it whether whether the kids continue on in the lessons or whether whether we decide Guided by Holy Spirit wisdom to do something else we don't want to communicate a message to our kids that you're irresponsible we want to drive them toward this belief that they are

responsible for their lives their actions their decisions MH right right but I feel this parents um dilemma right because the child has talent and so you want to lead them down that path of that talent and so right the parent gets a few Kudos too when you see your CH child really excelling in a certain area and so then to see them just throw that in the garbage and say I don't really care is a hard thing for a

parent MH yeah right and I think think that working at even getting underneath that like what what's going on inside of me like it's a you can get a tangled web pretty quickly where we're we're trying to go is this more about me or is it more for them and and what's you know what's this all about and so when we hear the word quit as a parent right I mean that that does something to me I'm

like I'm not raising a quitter this no child of mine is going to quit this thing and we can easily start Pro in down the road a little bit of what this might look like in 10 years if I let this kiddo quit at this point so and and you've each said something and I mean this is what you're talking about that that says some of this is about me the parent yeah I I get kudos as a parent

when my kids do well and no child of mine is going to act this way and who's that about those things that's

about us and so how do we disconnect ourselves and our value from what's Happening Here so that we can truly guide our kids in a way that that there aren't strings attached weird strings in their minds or in their Spirits as as we navigate this so Chad what was the answer to the the the gal who wrote this letter how did we

how did you navigate that yeah you know I I think when we look at the connected families framework it guides us with some questions so if we're if we're talking about this foundational aspect of of uh you're safe with me and communicating that message really safe emotionally physically spiritually this isn't about me my ident is secure I don't need you to perform or behave well in order for me to be okay try to work through and get out of that uh then kind

of moving into the idea of connection strong connection that we we want to keep uh our our connection and not lose um the connection we have with our child over this situation and so there's a message that comes out of that you know child you are loved no matter what and it's really then important to to ask the question what's it like to be my child what's going on here and as as I alluded to at the beginning in and saying okay

asking that question understanding being curious you know did the friend group leave band did they did they switch instruments did they go into the choir you know what what's the underlying piece here and we'll make a whole lot better decisions and stay connected to our kids when we have a better understanding of what's actually happening yep so you know those two pieces would be Primary in terms of before we get to what am I going to do

we're considering what's going on so Chad you may not even know this but you're you're referring to a product that we offer and that we want to make sure listeners know about which is this ebook about the four messages that we talk about at Connected families all the time right Stacy yeah that's right so the framework that is that has four messages you are safe with me you are love no matter what you are called and

capable and you are responsible and we have that um quick framework on a magnet but also wrote a whole ebook about it um it's called four messages every child longs to hear and if you want to get more information about that um look in our show notes um also go to our website connectedfamilies.org and you can get more information it's free yep yeah so Chad um you worked with this Mom you you helped her kind of understand how to

communicate the message you're safe with me and then the message you're love no matter how this goes I I'm going to work to understand you empathize you know all those things and through that to communicate the message you are loved H how did you move this mom toward helping her child be responsible as you responded yeah so those first two messages we we talk about safe and loved are really messages of Grace and um you know our kids need to have a a place

where they're going to fall back into a nest of Grace where they're loved unconditionally but then we move up the the the framework to called and capable and responsible and you start thinking about the messages of accountability and uh and so our kids need to have both of those pieces in play and so as you as you move

forward one of the things that I I oftentimes encourage parents to to um consider is Clarity is one of your best friends when it comes

to holding somebody accountable Clarity is one of your best friends yeah if there's a lack of clarity about what the expectations are it's really difficult to hold somebody accountable to something and so my question to this mom would be um so what was the expectation when music lessons started in September was it clear that we were going to re-evaluate after Christmas or we were going to evaluate again in May yeah um what what what did that look like so I

can hear a parent responding to that by saying well of course it was clear when you sign up for music lessons everybody knows they go through the school year they it's going to go to the end of the year I'm sure I said something about it when we started yeah and uh and you may have but it really um that's an important aspect but it it also matters quite a bit on what your child heard right or what their what their

perception you mean just because I just because I say it doesn't mean my child gets it well how do I know I assumed it yeah yeah or just because it's in my brain my child doesn't understand how what are some ways to make this clear yeah so so you're you're getting at it right where whether it's a document okay and sometimes that feels really formal but with a child who who in this situation the mom alludes to the fact

that we're worried that she's a good starter but not a good finisher you may want to have some real clarity about what the expectations are so uh we're going to start this in September we're going to look at it in May at the end of the school year and kind of see how you're feeling about it and what we're thinking about it and we'll come back together and re-evaluate okay if that's clear then this conversation really is

more about empathy and hearing and going yeah it's hard isn't it to stick with it and and do these things but here's what we agreed to and we know you can do it and and this is a struggle but how can we support you uh because we've agreed that this is the way that's going to look y so Clarity really gives us a good opportunity then for accountability and and then encouragement right we don't have to come and say you know you're not

going to quit or this isn't okay or I can't believe that it's like oh no I know it's hard but you can still do this hard thing and how can we help support you in that yeah you know uh with our daughter who struggled to honor that commitment and midyear most year she'd want to quit piano like ah I think this is the year I'm G to stop and I'm GNA quit and and you know well honey we've

made this commitment and we talked about it at the beginning of the year and we began to recognize one thing that would really help her was to look toward that end of year recital and she's very social person as well it made sense to us that if we could find a way for her to do a duet with a friend as part of the recital then that would help her stick through this commitment because now it wasn't just about the piano lessons and

the music it was about another human which for a lot of kids is important so so for her latee piano recital she did

duets with one of her friends all every year yeah and that was a big huge motivator that helped her and she was a part of that decision this as we talked about what do you need in order to honor that commitment yeah yeah I think that's that's really great and it takes the uniqueness of your child uh into

consideration as well um studying your child what do they need if we look at it as this kid just wants to quit everything and no you know no child of mine is going to quit this uh you can just feel the tone and it's going to turn into a battle likely um so that idea of how do you want to here's what needs to happen now how you're going to go about making that happen what are the

unique ways that you could get across the finish line here learn the things you need to learn and still have some some joy and some say in it so as a mom I'm thinking and hearing this conversation I'm and I'm I'm thinking okay so I've checked in with myself I'm careful to make sure that none of my baggage is attached to to this conversation with my daughter about her music lesson and then I'm working on empathy so I'm really asking the

question what's going on in her what else was going on that's causing her to really want to give this up right now okay so these are the steps this is how far I've gone but she still wants to quit and we're still having these battles every week over is she going to practice you know we're paying for the lesson and it's expensive and and so like it or not I am a little bit tied to practicing and getting her my money's

worth out of this so I know that's a little bit me but it's still the reality that a lot of parents are dealing with so how do I hold her responsible the question sort of is how do I get her to be responsible the real purposes I've heard you say it is is how do I help her take responsibility so I can force Behavior as a parent right but how do I help this child develop a sense of

responsibility for that and it is a hard one because I think there are some parents who we've heard from who say you know what it wasn't worth the energy it wasn't worth the cost to our relationship to force this anymore so so then the question was how do I help you become responsible for something whether it's the money or the time or using your talent or gifts in another way so that you're accountable to do that at a

bigger level than just piano lessons so sometimes we we get to this place where we Demand right Behavior finish your commitment to flute in this situation uh and uh we leverage relationship to get to it and at the end of the day we don't have a relationship and we don't have the behavior and now there's this Chasm that's being built uh in our relationship with our kids and and I wouldn't go to the place of saying I

will sacrifice all relationship or great amounts of relationship to get you to do this Behavior thing because I think there are other ways that we can help our kids learn to be respons which is what we're here we want you to be responsible so so uh I'm caught in this tension now and I'm hearing it and I'm hearing parents say okay I get it sometimes I need to keep pushing my kids to do the thing the lessons and

sometimes I need to back away and find a different outlet for them to develop their responsibility when I'm at that place how do I know it and then what do I do I think a lot of it comes from understanding what's going on with your child there's so much information that's going to come out of that like what's the rationale here even if you don't think it's it's uh it's reasonable or there's questions that you have about

that I think I think we're going to learn some things from that but if it's just a dead end like you're going to do this no I'm not you know are you going to really get next to them every single time to make them do their lesson yeah right to sit with them now the power struggle has engaged and pretty much your entire focus in in your relationship is centered around this issue yeah I don't I don't want I don't

want to be in that place right and so what are some alternatives to teaching responsibility uh like this did cost money and you need to understand the value of money and our time and effort that we um are making money for you to learn some things like this and so there might be a financial contribution that they need to make in order to pay you back there may be some other things that they want to commit toward and now if we

haven't been really strong in our expectation or clarity about what the expectation is this also then provides another opportunity for us to say okay well let's let's make sure that we are fully understanding what you're getting into in this next commitment that you're ready to make uh and what have we learned from this one and how do you want to push through because it's likely you're going to come to the same spot where you're going to go this is really

hard and I don't want to do this yeah and so now we're growing perseverance uh as well uh as we continue to teach responsibility and some decision making skills and some thoughtfulness and not everybody's going to be a musician all their lives so how you going to use your gifts your talents to be a blessing um if it's not going to be music and if you can come up with a wise appeal or proposal to us about what you would do

other than these lessons and how you'll make up for that money um then then let's have that conversation but until then I expect you to be ready for your lesson on Friday right on right on right I think it's honoring uh it also puts the ball back in in the court of the child Y and allows them to have to come up with some Creative Solutions yeah so I fought hard enough as a youngster Stacy I don't know about you uh the

reason that I ended up doing voice things was because I fought hard enough not to do guitar and not to do piano and and be and at the core of it what my mother discovered as she probed this with me was a deep discouragement about the fact that I would reach a learning plateau and then we realized I had I had a literal disability that made it impossible for my hands to work in opposition to each other when it got

complex interesting yeah and so and so for a couple of years I got a lot of Shame about that uh and got told I was lazy and got told I was a quitter and you know all these things when at the core of what was happening with me was a deep deep deep discouragement about the fact that something was wrong with me and I didn't have words for it I couldn't explain it all the other kids

who were doing what I was doing were moving on and I got stuck uh and I got deeply discouraged and you know it it really was in that discouraged place that Mom said I give up it wasn't like this wonderful happy conversation cuz she didn't have these tools um uh and it took me a while then to kind of regain this sense of responsibility for even as a 58-year-old man you know now I still struggle against this message in me that

says I'm irresponsible like there's something wrong with me at that level so uh I think some awareness of those Dynamics now not every child is me and I think there's kids who um can benefit greatly from the parent not just sitting there enforcing this but like I'll be with you during your lessons why don't I hang out in the room with you while you practice and and if it's getting hard for you you know I'll encourage you along the way

instead of just go over there and do your lessons and be alone in it and and struggle on your own and I'll I'll be present for you with you it doesn't I might have work to do but I'll do my work in the room I love that story Jim because even as a Mom it just reinforces the what's going on in my child and just really tuning into that and also be in prayer about that that's deeper issue

right like I just want to um be in tuned with with the Lord and see what wisdom he would give me in that situation y so wow that this topic is is complicated for families but I think we unpacked it pretty decently today so right before we end Jim why don't you summarize for the people listening well a it's complex yep so even the summary you know is subject to lots of interpretation but it's it's aim for keeping children in touch with

their responsibility for their lives for their actions and their decisions and to do what we can to to encourage them to put things in place for them to to um continue on and honor the commitment they've made to their lessons yeah but if if you're doing your best work to do that and there still is a snag don't let it cost you the relationship and find other ways for your child to move into responsibility good I like that thanks

for being with us Chad glad to be here thanks for having me thank you for joining us for this episode of of the connected families podcast we hope you got tips that you can use in your parenting today please subscribe and leave us a positive review so other families can find us and learn how to parent with peace and connection