

# Dealing with an Injured Student

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*by Kim Burge*

I never realized the impact I had on my students, especially those who were injured, until my daughter's injury prevented her from doing what she loves. I look back now at my leadership and realize that I fell into the pitfall of "lack of time" as a director. I am sad that I should, and probably could have made time to provide more encouragement for my injured team members.

Trauma came in multiple forms; car accidents, emergency surgery, dance injury, illness, family crisis, hospitalization and more. So often, my focus was on the dance that had to be ready. Fate would often have it that I would be adjusting the dance and/or replacing the dancer on Thursday before a performance! Often, my thoughts were about the final product and not the individual.

Seeing the physical and emotional pain my daughter has experienced made me reflect on my own leadership and I came to realize that I never prepared mentally for such events and in many cases could have handled team and/or individual trauma much better.

## **Be Prepared!**

- ✿ Have a plan of action (crisis plan). Create a communication chain so you will be notified in the event of an injury or illness. Idea: Published your telephone number on a business card and give to team members for use only in the event of an emergency.
- ✿ Have a team telephone list available in multiple places; office, office computer, home, home computer, in your daily planner, in a special drawer at home.
- ✿ Buy multiple "Get Well" cards in advance to have on hand for quick acknowledgement of the injury/illness. An e-card is quick and easy but a written card has much greater impact! And write an encouraging note in the card!

## **Communicate!**

- ✿ Early on, initiate a conversation with the team member. Call the team member as soon as you hear of the accident/illness. Even if the parent of the student contacts you, ask to visit with the student.
- ✿ Communicate daily. Remind yourself to call the ill/injured for a daily update. This really isn't for you, but it is for the child. Follow up communication can be in the form of a telephone call, a text message, an e-mail. Put a note to yourself in a prominent place to remind yourself. Establish a time; example; immediately upon returning to your office after lunch.
- ✿ Visit with the parent frequently. The team member may not give you the information you need. Remember that medication may have a major factor with this aspect so it is important that you visit with the parent to find out exactly how your team member is feeling both physically and emotionally.
- ✿ If time permits, go for a visit in the hospital, at the house, etc.

## **Incorporate the Help of Others!**

- ✿ Put the social committee into action. Have the team make/sign "we miss you/get well" cards. Determine which dance and which social officer will visit the injured team member first. Rotate duties.
- ✿ Keep team members involved to help the injured keep a connection to the happenings of the team. Provide permissible information and encourage team members to send e-cards, make a telephone call, text message etc.
- ✿ Ask the booster club to provide a meal(s) or take desserts to the family.
- ✿ Set up a line item in your activity fund budget or booster club budget for flowers for emergencies.

## **The Return!**

- ✿ Depending upon the situation, the returning team member will immediately want to become involved with team events again. Be prepared with a plan of action for the team member's return. Be sure to discuss any limitations with the parent and have a written release from the doctor if an injury has prevented the team member from participating.
- ✿ Ask yourself these questions:
  - \* Have I discussed my team member's return and limitations with the parent?
  - \* Do I have a written release from the doctor?
  - \* Does the written release spell out what actions can and can not be performed?
  - \* How will I incorporate the team member into future performances/activities?
  - \* Do I have a rule in place concerning performance activities? Ex: Must be in attendance at rehearsal on Thursday and Friday. How does this rule limit me as a director?
  - \* What happens to another team member if we are performing a partner dance (manipulation of prop becomes an issue)?
  - \* Are there special needs for the returning team member? (Wheelchair, crutches)
  - \* Have I established with the parents and team member a projected return date to practice/performance?
  - \* What can my injured team member possibly be feeling emotionally?
  - \* Is there a way that I can keep the team member involved in rehearsal?



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If the team member is physically limited and moves much slower than the other team members, here are three thoughts to assisting the injured.

- \* Send the injured ahead of the team, but send at least two team members with the injured team member.
- \* Allow time for the team walk at the pace of the injured.
- \* Have the injured follow, but select a few team members to have the honor of walking with the injured. Make sure this comes off as an honor, not a duty and rotate this responsibility to involve not just best friends but other team members.
- ✿ Consider transportation accommodations, if needed (ie: private transportation, arrive later than the team, etc.)
- ✿ Think ahead. Always have a special seat for the injured team member.
- ✿ It is important to think twice when making any decisions Once about the team and again about the injured team member.

Having a team member out of pocket may seem like high maintenance but I assure you that your efforts will pay you back two fold. Your efforts will create support, loyalty, set a strong example for your team and more! I assure you, it is much better to be thoughtful than be criticized for failing to do what is right!

As a director, you hold the key to the team member's future opportunities. The team member, most often, is devastated and believes dance/drill team opportunities have ended. Keeping the team member involved, spirits high and communicating is the key.

#### **Resources:**

##### Get Well Cards

- ✿ Current Catalog [www.currentcatalog.com](http://www.currentcatalog.com)
- ✿ Factory Outlet [www.factorycard.com](http://www.factorycard.com)
- ✿ American Greetings [www.americangreetings.com](http://www.americangreetings.com)
- ✿ Cards Direct [www.cardsdirect.com](http://www.cardsdirect.com)
- ✿ E-Bay [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) (Search for "Get Well Cards")

##### Printable Cards to Download

- ✿ Fun Cards for You <http://www.funcardsforyou.com>
- ✿ PictureBuzz <http://www.picturebuzz.com>

##### Create Team Cards

- ✿ ShutterFly <http://www.shutterfly.com>

##### E-Cards

- ✿ Things to Say: <http://www.things-to-say.com/e-cards-greetings-getwell.htm>
- ✿ All Free Fun Cards <http://allfreefuncards.com/2q0olcezu/>
- ✿ Beliefnet Greeting <http://beliefnetgreetings.com>
- ✿ Blue Mountain <http://www.bluemountain.com>
- ✿ Musical Cards <http://www.ez-greets.com>
- ✿ Kodak <http://www.kodakgallery.com>
- ✿ Care <http://www.care2.com>
- ✿ IncrediMail <http://www.incredimail.com>
- ✿ SmileBox <http://www.smilebox.com> (can create video card!)
- ✿ My Fun Cards <http://myfuncards.smileycentral.com/>
- ✿ Cards Artie <http://cards.artie.com/cards64.html>

