



Recently, while cruising Facebook, I came across an essay written by a Cheer Mom entitled “Why My Daughter is a Cheerleader (and why I wish I had been one).” It is a poignant point of view, filled with observations and experiences gained during several years as a “Cheer Mom.” I have taken the liberty of summarizing and paraphrasing to offer the following:

Here is a sampling of what is learned through Cheer:

- **How to really, truly function as a team member and the indescribable value of self-discipline.**
 - ...requires an entire team of 20-35 youths and adolescents to work in rapid-fire, perfect synchronization with all-out athleticism for a full routine.
 - ...every athlete must put forth their best work every practice, every competition, EVERY TIME.
 - ...the team really depends upon each athlete, and if he/she does not do her part, his/her team cannot fully do their part.
 - ...THERE IS NO BENCH!
 - ...this emerging self-discipline will be of benefit his/her entire life.
- **How to get along with people that she would not otherwise (while under pressure, no less!).**
 - ...builds life skills by learning how to get along with people when they are under stress. How to accept them. How to forgive them.
 - ...to work with ALL teammates to produce a work product that benefits everyone.
- **How to perform, compete, and meet high expectations in front of thousands of screaming fans...and gracefully accept the consequences.**
 - ...self-confidence grows exponentially.
 - ...gain the ability to speak or perform for anyone.
 - ...teaches the ability to accept the admiration and congratulations of others, without the accompanying arrogance that can be so tempting.
 - ...teaches how to forgive herself, her teammates, and sometimes even her coaches.
 - ...teaches that experiencing difficulty is not a reason to give up and quit, but to persevere and try harder.
- **How to implement a plan established by her boss with which she does not completely agree.**
 - ...coaches are skilled at assessing each athlete’s talents and abilities and placing them on a squad and in a routine for their benefit and for the benefit of the squad.
 - ...teaches athletes that adults with more experience have perspectives that they have yet to gain.
- **Personal fitness.**
 - ...athletes attain a level of physical fitness that is rarely seen among their non-cheerleading peers.
 - ...athletes gain a level of strength, endurance, flexibility and power that benefits them immensely.
 - This high level of fitness has enormous emotional benefits.

Trophies are not the most valuable prizes athletes take away from their experiences as cheerleaders...there is so much more that they will carry with them long after they have forgotten which place they took at which competition.