



Show Mom Strategies

Accompanying my adolescent daughter to horse shows has provided many lessons over the years. As I communicate with other moms around the country through email and newsletters, I think these lessons are pretty universal.

Be the Mom, Not the Trainer

Probably all of us at some point think we can take on an assistant training role. After watching hundreds of lessons, we all start thinking we know something about riding a horse. Some of us have even had our own careers in horse showing, which only adds to our confidence that we can be helpful.

I cannot think of a faster route to conflict with trainer and daughter. Moms are not trainers and do best when we keep those little tips, opinions and comments to ourselves. How many of us have watched our daughters ride and then felt compelled to add a comment or suggestion?

Stop – think first!

Tip: It is my policy to leave trainer and rider alone once they leave the barn. I watch from afar and do not engage when they are in the zone.

Note: For those of you who are moms *and* trainers, I've noticed you often have your children ride with other trainers, so you can be mom. Smart!

Be the unconditional fan!

What is the most common question we often ask: 'What ribbons did you get?' Or, 'Where did you place?'

This can put pressure on a kid and maybe send the wrong message. It is not all about winning, especially when they hit a slump. Our job as parents is to be unconditional fans no matter how our children have performed. There is plenty of pressure towards winning from their peers, the trainers, and themselves.

Tip: Try asking, 'How was the ride?' 'Great job!' is another good comment. 'What did you learn?' is another good one, or my all time favorite, 'You handled that well!'

Positive questions and comments should be the first things out of our mouths, and ribbons third or fourth in the order of the conversation.

Get Involved: Learn all about horses and horse showing

If you want to earn your daughter's respect and better understand the horse world – read her magazines (when she is not around), check out horse websites, be present for vet visits. Understand how to clean tack, wrap legs, and take blankets off and on – even offer to help sometimes. If you get individual non-showing memberships to USEF and USHJA, you can keep up on the news and rules.

Tip: Think of your role at the horse show as that of a partner sharing in some of the work. Partners have an easier time of it than parents of teen daughters.

Horse showing became one place we could put aside most of the teen daughter/mother hassles and become partners working together to make things happen.

Show Mom.com

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