

Lead By Example

Since the girls have been playing tennis for so long, I never indulged in any tennis lessons. Never had time, wearing too many hats, so many other pressing things to do. I studied the game, and definitely can tell them what's wrong with their strokes, but get me out there and try to duplicate what I told my daughters, that's another story. Tennis is NOT an easy sport to learn, and definitely isn't a simplistic sport to master. There are a multitude of skills they must perfect from picking up their feet, bending their knees, mental focus, shot selections, and have their racquet back ready for the next shot and a whole host of other things. I see why there aren't a bunch of stupid people playing tennis! Cognition is imperative to success in this sport. Since I didn't play the game and as the girls got older, it was difficult to get the girls to listen to what I said because in their words, "Mommy, you don't know how to play tennis, so how can you be right?" Well, that's when I throw out to them, "I'm the queen and you are the little princesses, so you do what I say or suffer the consequences. The beauty of being a parent is that I don't have to convince you, just do what I say." Of course, they couldn't top that, and would ultimately concede reluctantly. They quickly realized they were in a no win situation. As time progressed however, they knew I wasn't too far off the mark. Recently given the fact that I have gained 30 pounds, and I want to lose this load I'm carrying around, I have elected to learn the sport of tennis, after having them out here on the court for over 12 years. Of course my tennis instructors are my daughters. I walk a great deal, but needed to incorporate another activity that would burn more calories. Tennis was the obvious choice. I actually thought they would cut me a little slack. No such luck! First was fitness. I said if I could get through this, I would get down on my knees and thank God for mercy. Both the girls ran the baseball field, now it was my turn. I ran it once, head felt a little light, so I sat down. Please everyone as a safety precaution, if you don't feel right stop immediately, or you'll be pushing up daisies! Mary and Elizabeth approached me, Mary said, "Mom why are you sitting?" I responded, "Heck, I'm tired. I can't do anymore right now, I need to rest." Elizabeth said sheepishly, "Can't?

That's shouldn't be in your vocabulary Mom." I recalled saying that a couple of times to the both of them. She had the audacity to use my exact rhetoric! She is really treading on thin ice! Since I was utterly exhausted, I didn't have enough breath to tell them I'm the queen and they are the princesses. Mary and Elizabeth smiled at each other in triumph as if to say, "We got her now!" I looked at both of them, saying to myself, "This is a conspiracy! I'm 50 and they're 11 and 13 and do they actually think they are going to hold me to the same standard that I hold them?" Well the answer was, emphatically YES. Mary said, "Mommy you said you didn't raise a quitter, but you're quitting." I replied, "The heart is willing just these legs can't go any further, that happens when you're out of shape. I'm not thinking about you; you're not going to kill me out here!" Of course they thought this was hilarious. Actually, I didn't. I was dead serious. Well, in my attempt to try to lead by example. I got up and made another ill fated attempt. Yes, they were right, I had often said, "Failure is not an option." I was able to run to the end of the baseball field, but it appeared everything was spinning at an incredible pace. I tried to sit down to stop the world from spinning, placed my hand down, I think I bent my knees but two seconds later, I had fallen to ground, face first onto the grass. Thank God it was grass! As I laid there, I said to myself. "Why in the heck did I allow my kids to talk me into doing this? This is insane! The world kept spinning and now the sun was gazing straight into my face and there was nothing I could do about it. I concluded if I lay here long enough they would eventually come to my rescue. I could only look in their direction. No words came out of my mouth. I did see Mary grab a water bottle thank goodness and they both sprinted onto the baseball field to my rescue. Elizabeth leaned over and said with a concerned express. "Mom are you alright?" I responded, "Could you stand a little to the right, the sun is in my eyes." They both laughed and sighed in relief simultaneously. Mary said, "Mom, drink some water." I complied. Elizabeth said, "Mom what happened?" I said, "Didn't I tell you I couldn't run this thing anymore? Yes, I know I said can't shouldn't be in your vocabulary, but I couldn't do it. I'm

totally out of shape. You two are like slave drivers! This is ridiculous. If I say I can't I will not." They both laughed and Elizabeth said, "Oh, so it's going to be, 'Do as I say and not as I do.' huh Mom? That's not right." I replied, "Until I get in better shape this is ridiculous. I didn't get out of shape overnight and I'm certainly not going to get back in shape overnight. It's a process. Look at it this way. If you don't want me to do the Michael Jackson, I suggest I work up to where the two of you are, or I'm going to drop dead." That statement was literally a jolt back to reality. They responded in unison. "Okay Mommy! Let us help you up!" I said, "No, just let me stay here for awhile, feels pretty good down here. It's such a beautiful day." Well, I'm getting better, gaining more energy, hitting more balls on the court and it's motivating the girls too. The girls are having the time of their life, laughing at me of course! I'm not offended by their laughter. They really enjoy me being out there. It makes it a little easier for them. This is the least I can do to show I support them. It is so easy to sit on the bench or watch from courtside dictating to them what they need to do. It is so easy to pass judgment. They enjoy me taking part in the activity they love. I told them, "You know I hold a great deal of respect for the two of you for what you do. This is not easy at all. Between homework and tennis, there isn't much time for anything else. So many times I have said to you, 'Why didn't you hit the ball this way? Why didn't you run down the ball? Why did you stop running? You could do better than that. Your serve was off.' I'm really sorry for coming down so hard on the two of you but I know what you're capable of. Just go out there and always try your best. That's all I ask of you. I will learn to play this game, and try my best and take it from there." They hugged me and said, "Okay Mommy, I love you." Mary said, "See Mom, it's not easy but thanks for understanding." I said, with a look of exhaustion with beads of sweat on my forehead, "I love you too and trust me I do understand." After a short break, I was back out there again. Lead by example works, when you're actually following your own advice. Guess what? I'm losing weight too!

Written by: Yvonne Profit, 2/18/2010