

Odyssey of the Mind

A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

Who *wouldn't* want to be an Odyssey coach? I can't imagine why anyone would turn down the prospect of seven additional children (in an already overcrowded house) once a week - even two or three times or more as March draws near! Just think of the excuses you can use for having a messy garage or basement. "Oh, that's what the Odyssey team is working on," or "I'm saving that for Odyssey." If you are not a coach, you couldn't say that! ...

Remember the *Wide World of Sports* "'Thrill of Victory and the Agony of Defeat?" Being an Odyssey coach lets you experience both of those. No, I am not referring to winning at competition. (Although that would be fun!) The thrill of victory is similar to landing that really big fish. The thrill isn't in the prize, but in the battle. I know you are saying, "What's the connection?" Well, have you ever tried to drag an idea out of a fourth grader? That is a very long, protracted battle and the victory is finally the "Eureka" moment. Of course, the agony of defeat covers many areas: structures that don't hold their own weight, props that won't stay together and teammates bickering amongst themselves. But never fear, the coach is here with those reassuring, well-rehearsed words, "Can you think of another way to do that?"

Think of an Odyssey coach as combination rocket scientist, UN negotiator and taxi driver. The fruits of your labor aren't always appreciated, some don't want to hear what you say, and the tips are few and far between! However, when the kids come up with the novel ideas and then turn their group from seven individuals into one synchronized unit, you feel really great. Your heart beats faster, you get that lump in your throat; just like that for your own child. They *are* your children and will continue to have some attachment even after competition.

We aren't coaches because we like to go to competition or win awards; it's for the special feeling we get when those seven little minds begin working together and become a problems-solving super machine!

REASONS TO COACH ODYSSEY OF THE MIND (by Lisa Love)

No other activity offers all of the following options in one wonderful package:

- ❖ A chance to help children implement their own unique ideas
- ❖ A time to learn to think more divergently ourselves
- ❖ A method for teaching the concepts of true teamwork to children
- ❖ An opportunity to interact with children in a special and unforgettable way
- ❖ An exciting way to teach unlimited lifelong skills to children
- ❖ An exciting way to learn lifelong attitudes towards creativity
- ❖ A means to make a difference in the future for your own child and many others

Creativity, teamwork, self-confidence, persistence, and problem-solving: all these are fostered in Odyssey. All of these also engender some mess, some chaos, some experimentation, some learning through failure. But what more glorious way to teach such important lessons than by having fun and feeling part of a unique and supportive group of creative people?