

Dear Mom and Dad:

You always told me to tell you when something is troubling me. I wanted to tell you the other day when you were so upset with me, but I just couldn't. Maybe I can explain it now. Remember last Saturday when I was wrestling and I went after a takedown in the first period? I just about had it, but I slipped and got taken down myself. I could hear you yelling at me for being so stupid. I was sure embarrassed – a little because I slipped, but a lot because you were yelling at me.

Then do you remember yelling what I was doing wrong when I was trying to keep my opponent from escaping? While listening to you I forgot about my opponent. Well, you know what happened – he reversed me and pinned me with a cradle. I didn't feel so bad losing, but I felt terrible afterward when you gave me that “you-dumb-jerk” look.

I know you want me to be a good wrestler. And I really try hard. But when you yell at me all the time it just makes things worse. At first I thought the worse I got the more you yelled; but now I think that the more you yell the worse I get. Maybe if you would encourage me just a little rather than always criticizing me, I would do better.

One other thing. The only time you are happy is when I win. I try really hard, and want to win too, but some of the kids I wrestle are really good. I feel bad when I lose, but when you get mad at me afterward it only makes it worse. Sometimes it's not what you say, but the way you look at me.

Do you remember sitting at the dinner table at the beginning of the season, and telling me that winning wasn't the most important thing, but making an effort to win was? You said that what you wanted was for me to develop pride in myself and to have fun wrestling. Well, I want to develop pride, but you always remind me of my mistakes. I want to have fun, but you keep taking the fun away. I have tried my best, but it doesn't seem to be good enough for you.

I don't want to quit wrestling, but I don't want to always feel stupid and embarrassed around the guys. What do you think I should do?

Love,  
Your Son

Appropriated from the *Punxsatawney groundhogs*: credited (not verifiable) to the US Wrestling Federation's *“Parents guide to Kids Wrestling”*