



carol@carolrossandassociates.com | www.carolrossandassociates.com | 303.666.0580

## Lessons Learned From a Kids' Talent Show

I recently attended my son's elementary school talent show—60 kids, two hours on a Sunday afternoon, and innumerable parents in tow with cameras and camcorders, hair brushes and ribbons, piano music, assorted instruments, and ballet shoes. Every parent hopes that their child will be early in the program, so that they don't have to suffer through the last dance number, the last violin piece, or the last set of jokes. Yet the joke was on me that day.

Little did I know that the talent I saw on stage was reflecting back to me life lessons, ones that we know intuitively but bury in our serious adult world.

I saw Vibrancy in the nine Chinese girls who each moved their small bodies uniquely but in unison to a traditional Chinese dance.

I saw Chutzpah in the 1<sup>st</sup> grader who decided to play "Lightly Row" on a violin while swirling a hula hoop around her waist.

I saw Grace in the hip hop dancer who apprehensively followed her partner until it was her turn to shine with gymnastic-like moves.

I saw Confidence in the big sister who took the lead on a basketball inspired dance with her little brother.

I saw Passion in the remarkable 2<sup>nd</sup> grade singer who belted out "Proud To Be An American".

And then it occurred to me that I was able to see these things because of some very special circumstances of this venue. A kids' talent show is where proud parents look for the divine in every child's contribution to the show, so that their own child will be afforded that same respect. No boos or gossipy whispers here. Only hearty clapping and attentive eyes. A kids' talent show is where no one gets turned down for lack of talent, because the belief is that the talent is ours to receive, not to judge. And in a kids' talent show, no child knows the imaginary limits that adults arbitrarily put on themselves. They only know they want to show the world what they can do, without any expectations of the results.

Sure there's nervousness, self-consciousness, and even a few frogs in the young emcee's throat. More than once I could sense a young performer's wish to move off the large stage as quickly as possible. But the audience's gentle response to "flaws" in the show gave everyone in the auditorium the feeling that it really is okay to make mistakes, that mistakes are a natural part of life.

I wondered what it would be like to have a talent show of this sort in the adult world. Would we, as adults, after years of self-doubt, respond as performers as brilliantly as these children? And could our audience in daily life receive our gifts, just as they were intended to be given, without judgement?

There is a talent show being performed before our very eyes every day in our workplaces. Joe has the gift of organizing the company picnic so that no one feels left out. Sally has the gift of sensing a colleague's uneasiness about a new assignment and dissolving the anxiety through laughter. Mary has the gift of following a fuzzy idea through to practical implementation. David has the gift of connecting two disparate ideas and making something brand new. Somehow, our thinking went astray when someone decided that talent could only be found in a talent show or in Hollywood.

The next time you have the urge to find the flaw in someone's thinking, to give "constructive" criticism, to dwell on what your supervisor forgot to do for you, let yourself be pleasantly surprised. View the world through the lens of a kids' talent show. You'll be delighted with what you see. But more importantly, through the act of seeing in this new way, you create Believing Eyes. And in doing so, each of us creates the conditions for one another to step into our own brilliance. And after all, isn't that why we came to the show?

Copyright © 2006 by Carol Ross and Associates, LLC. , [www.carolrossandassociates.com](http://www.carolrossandassociates.com). Contact [carol@carolrossandassociates.com](mailto:carol@carolrossandassociates.com) for reprint permission. If you enjoyed this article, visit Carol's blog, [www.blog.carolrossandassociates.com](http://www.blog.carolrossandassociates.com), and podcasts, [www.liveactioncoaching.com](http://www.liveactioncoaching.com), [www.leadingwithawholenewmind.com](http://www.leadingwithawholenewmind.com), and [www.consciousliving-leaving.com](http://www.consciousliving-leaving.com). Carol is an executive coach, organization development consultant, and writer with over 20 years experience in the telecommunications and energy industries. Carol specializes in helping clients get unstuck and into the flow of great work. She works her magic by bringing the power of the creative, intuitive right brain into a left-brained world. While her degrees in engineering from Northwestern University have served her well, it's been her life and work experiences that have moved her to do her best work. She is certified by The Coaches Training Institute and credentialed by the International Coach Federation.