

Her own two blades

“For what felt like an eternity, I watched her try to stand up on her skates, only to fall again and again.”

I am the first to admit that I'm no fan of winter and not one for cold-weather sports. But this is Canada, and I want my children to have every opportunity to participate in winter fun. So when my daughter, Lindsay, turned five, my husband and I decided it was time for her to learn to skate. We took her to a used-sports-equipment shop and outfitted her with bright white skates and a helmet in her favourite colour, purple. Lindsay felt happy to have her own skates just like her big brother, Matthew.

A couple of weeks later, her classes at the local sports centre began. As I tied up her skate laces, I felt a twinge of panic: I should have taken her to the outdoor rink near our house so that she had some idea of what to expect. I wished I'd thought of it earlier, but it was too late to worry. I took a deep breath and told myself to relax — she was in good hands. Three seasoned instructors were ready to take on the challenge of teaching her, along with 17 other preschoolers.

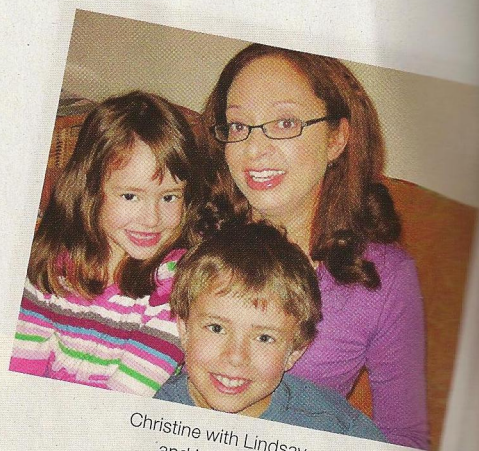
One by one, the instructors gingerly placed each child on the ice, laying them gently on their stomachs in a big circle. To teach the children how to stand up on the ice, they began with a little song: *Fish in the water, fish in the water, we all stand up. One* (up on one foot), *two* (hand on knee), *three* (push up to standing).

Over and over, they practised getting down and standing up. The kids in the class were really getting the hang of it. All, it seemed, except my Lindsay. She struggled to stand up even once. For what felt like an eternity, I watched her put one foot on the ice, then her hand on her knee, then try to push the rest of her body up...only to fall again. I could see tears welling in her eyes.

I felt guilty putting her through what looked like torture. Maybe she wasn't ready for skating. I wanted to grab her off the ice and tell her, “It's OK, you don't have to do this.” I wanted to yell at the instructors to help her. But something about her determination made me resist intervening. I could see she was getting tired; she had been trying to stand up for almost 30 minutes. Still, she hadn't given up and she wasn't looking to leave. The instructors all stayed positive and kept encouraging her. And then, in the last five minutes of class...success! Lindsay stood up to a huge round of cheers from both instructors and classmates. The look of pride on her face was unforgettable.

As we were walking back toward the change room, I asked Lindsay how she liked it. “Skating is *so* fun,” she exclaimed. “The class is a little bit short, though.”

I learned something that morning. The desire to protect your children



Christine with Lindsay and Matthew.

from feeling stressed or getting upset is strong. But if I had interfered, I would have robbed Lindsay of the chance to achieve something on her own, to develop a belief in her own abilities and an excitement about skating. That first skating lesson showed me that I

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needed to trust in Lindsay's abilities and resilience, as well as my own judgment. Perhaps it was a glimpse of future challenges that lie ahead for us. I hope I can remember it when she reaches her teen years.

by **CHRISTINE OSBORNE**

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