



Goal Thinking Versus Process Thinking (adapted from John Leonard)

I would like to encourage parents to think about the mindset of their children as they approach the starting blocks before an event. It is common at swim meets for children to ask their coach things like, "What do you think I can go in this 100 free?" or, "My goal is to go 1:05", etc. etc. etc.. In short, GOAL THINKING, or otherwise sometimes described as "outcome thinking."

Now, that's not a bad thing. But it is NOT what they should be thinking about as they get ready to swim! Instead, the swimmer should be asking the coach, "What do I need to be doing to go 1:05 in the 100 free?" And the answer would be something like this: "Breathe every 5 on the 1st 25 and every 3 strokes the rest of the way. Take two strokes out of every wall before you breathe, and pick up your arm tempo on the 3rd 25 and your legs on the last 25".

(For a younger swimmer, the answer would be something more simple like, "Breathe every three and let me see good strong kicking on the last lap!" That's called PROCESS thinking. PROCESS THINKING is what helps the child focus on and remember what they need to be DOING when they swim.

That's what helps them to go fast. Heading for the blocks repeating their GOAL over and over in their your head will result in.....nothing.

Goals and goal thinking/outcome thinking is what gets them out of bed on Monday morning to go to practice after a long rainy weekend. It's what gets them to go to practice when their friends who are non-swimming slugs are going to the mall or sitting on their couch watching TV.

Therefore, goal thinking is IMPORTANT. But at the meet, we need focused, PROCESS THINKING to get better. Parents, I am sure you already understand all this, so please help us teach it to all your children.