

TOP TIP #4

Commitment to swimming does not guarantee objective performance outcomes.

Because swimming is a sport where performance improvements are not linear, it is important to remember that making a commitment to sport does not guarantee objective performance outcomes. Instead in sport, much like in any other performance domain, expected outcomes will fluctuate over time. Past performances are not necessarily indicative of future performances. As shown in TOP TIPS 1 and 2, fluctuations in performance are normal, and at times, despite your best efforts, taper does not work the way you wanted.



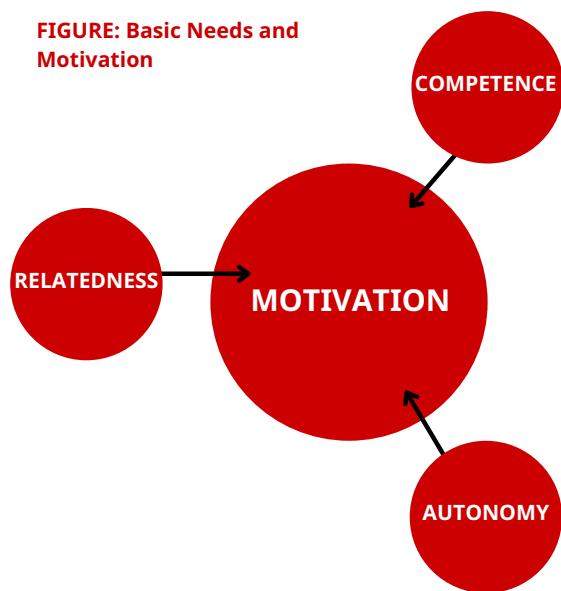
To help you navigate the ups and downs of swimming, it is useful to periodically ask yourself: What is my WHY? Why do I love swimming? What drives me to practice and give my full intensity and effort in the water? More often than not, the answer to your WHY falls into one or more of three main categories:

1. It facilitates your sense of relatedness. In other words, **you feel like you belong** (in the water, and/or socially. Being in the water is fun).
2. It facilitates your sense of competence. In other words, **you feel like you can** (push yourself, master your skills, relieve your stress, win. Being able to do all of these things makes swimming fun).
3. It facilitates your sense of autonomy. In other words, **you feel like you are in control and you have a choice** (this is my space, my sport. It is fun).

To help you sustain your motivation for swimming, it is important to remember that swimming success is more than just performance outcomes, wins, and medals (See TOP TIP 2, how do you define success). By focusing your WHY on the basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017) outlined above, you are more likely to enjoy swimming, feel motivated, and subsequently sustain your intensity and effort even when your performance outcomes are not as you hoped for.

It is important to remember, that you alone, as an athlete cannot create an environment that fosters your basic needs. It is the important people around you - such as coaches, teammates, parents, friends - that are instrumental in shaping your swimming experience. Equally, you play an important role in shaping the swim experience for others - your coaches, teammates, parents, and friends. Together, you can create an environment that fosters everyone's basic needs.

FIGURE: Basic Needs and Motivation



HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

Autonomy: Using words and behaviors that attempt to understand and acknowledge an individual's wishes, preferences, and points of view. Autonomy can also be supported by providing a rationale for a required/desired behavior, and by offering choices.

Competence: Encouraging an individual to be initiative in their actions (go for it!). Competence can also be supported by respecting the individual's wishes on how to best support them (giving and not giving sport performance feedback), and giving them space to take control.

Relatedness: Showing interest in the individual and their activities, and showing genuine empathy when faced with disappointment. Making sure the individual knows that your love and care for them is unconditional and not tied to performance accomplishments.
(Ryan & Deci, 2017)

SCIENCE FACT:

Fulfillment of basic needs plays a significant role in sustaining sport participation. In fact, research has found that sport dropout has been explained by higher levels of motivation and by lower satisfaction of relatedness and autonomy needs.
(Calvo et al., 2010)

