



FOUNDATIONS OF *Coaching*

Chapter 1: Philosophy and Ethics

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Part 1: Personal Reasons for Coaching and Personal Philosophy

Topic Questions:

1. Why choose to coach?
2. How is a personal coaching philosophy developed and communicated?

Each coach has his or her own reasons for coaching often depending on past experience. For example, one person who swam competitively throughout high school and college decided coaching was a way to remain involved in swimming after her competitive career ended. Another decided to coach because he had a great youth coach and he wanted to emulate that person, while yet another thrives on helping young people reach their dreams and potential. Here is a list of reasons why some people decide to coach. Are there other reasons not on the list?

- Coaching allows me to continue competing against others.
- I love swimming.
- I had a positive youth swimming experience and want to share this with young people.
- I had a negative youth sport experience and want to provide a better environment for young people.
- Coaching allows me to remain involved with swimming.
- I enjoy working with young people and helping them reach their goals and dreams.
- I enjoy teaching and coaching is a form of teaching.
- My kids are on the swim team, and I want to be involved with them.
- The swim club needed a coach and I needed a job.

Determining why to coach begins the process of developing a personal coaching philosophy. This philosophy will be a reflection of beliefs, values, ideas and attitudes. As a coach develops a personal coaching philosophy, remember that it should reflect both the needs of the swimmers and the needs of the coach. So, how might a coach develop personal philosophy of coaching?

- Examine the needs of the swimmers.
- Examine personal needs.
- Read articles on coaching; listen to other coaches; discuss issues openly with co-coaches.
- Make a written list of personal coaching values.
- Write a statement of coaching philosophy and date it.
- Review and update the values and philosophy statement at least once a year.

A club should also develop a clear philosophy and mission. The coach has a better chance of stability and long term involvement with the club if his or her philosophy is in line with the club's philosophy and mission. For this reason, the head coach, the assistant coaches, and the club leaders should work together to discuss and develop a philosophy and mission statement for the club. An assistant should be sure that his or her personal philosophy is not in open conflict with that of the head coach or governing body of the club. An assistant coach can openly discuss personal coaching philosophy with the head coach to look for and resolve conflicts. In a healthy club the philosophies of the head coach, the administrators, and the staff are in tune. If not, it may be time for one or more parties to seek a different environment.



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Part 2: Qualities of an Effective Coach

Topic Questions:

1. What are the qualities of an effective coach?
2. What personal qualities may enhance the effectiveness of a coach?
3. How can a coach earn credibility, trust and respect?

All coaches have different skills and strong points. While some coaches are more effective teachers, others may be more effective motivators, communicators or technicians. In general, three qualities determine the effectiveness of a coach. A swimming coach is or should be:

- Knowledgeable
- Organized
- Sympathetic

Swimming coaches should be knowledgeable in three areas. First, they should be knowledgeable in a variety of academic areas including physiology, principles of physical training, psychology, teaching methods and communication. Second, they should be knowledgeable in the sport of swimming. This knowledge includes stroke mechanics, the strategies and tactics of each swimming event, water safety and training methods for swimming. Third, a coach should have good interpersonal skills in order to work effectively with parents, officials, and administrators.

Swimming coaches should be organized and well prepared. Swimming is a sport that depends upon developing a base and following a purposeful progression throughout a season and career. A swimming coach should develop general seasonal plans and specific practice plans for each practice. Swimming is also a sport in which many individuals constitute a team. These individuals may have diverse skill levels and varying personal goals. Unless a coach is well organized, the coach could easily lose the team concept by focusing on a few individuals or lose sight of the importance of each team member by focusing exclusively on the team.

Swimming coaches should be sympathetic to their athletes. To be sympathetic means to understand and share what others are feeling and to respond to them appropriately. For example, a sympathetic coach feels success with those who swim personal best times and feels loss for those who run out of gas midway through a race. The sympathetic coach understands that swimmers have various experiences during the day, at home, at school or with friends that will affect their behavior and performance in practice.

Personal Qualities the Coach Possesses

The coach's personal qualities help to determine coaching effectiveness. Coaches possess some qualities while others develop over time. You personally possess many qualities that you may take for granted or may not recognize as positive qualities. Here are a few:

- Knowledge. This includes knowledge of swimming skills, rules and strategies as well as knowledge of the sport sciences.
- Physical abilities. The ability to swim or to demonstrate skills enhances effectiveness.
- Experience. Coaching swimmers requires both experience in swimming and experience in working with young people.
- Patience. A coach needs patience in working with young people over the long term.
- Emotional control. Keep both accomplishments and frustrations in perspective. This quality includes the ability to laugh at oneself and to remain pleasant through frustrating circumstances.
- Vocabulary of swimming terms and phrases. Command of this vocabulary is a quality that communicates knowledge and experience.
- Speaking ability. This is the ability to speak clearly and hold the swimmers' attention.
- Organization. A coach should have organization in daily and long term preparation and planning.
- Empathy. Athletes need to feel that they can communicate with their coach and be understood.
- A sense of humor. This quality goes a long way when working with young people and their parents.



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A coach can learn, develop and enhance these qualities. Some of these skills may already be well developed; others may need improvement.

Qualities Attributed to the Coach

Michael Josephson, a well known business ethics advisor, has said that we tend to think of ourselves in terms of our best intentions, but others tend to look at us based on our last worst act.

The coach does not automatically possess personal qualities such as credibility, respect or trust in the same way he or she possess knowledge, experience and physical abilities. These qualities are attributed to the coach by the swimmers, other coaches, employers, parents and others, based upon coaching style, communication, teaching style and motivational style. In other words, actions gain credibility, respect and trust for you. These personal qualities attributed to the coach influence coaching and organizational effectiveness. The more the swimmers, other coaches, parents, and employers respect and trust the coach, the more they will be willing to cooperate. These are qualities that are earned over time through actions and good works. There are many keys to developing credibility, respect and trust, but there are three keys that deserve special mention:

- Being accountable
- Using excellent listening skills
- Being professional

Being Accountable

Being accountable means several things. First, it means to be able to measure, in objective terms, the progress of the team towards goals and then to report on this progress in a written monthly report to the employer. A coach can report on team numbers (members) broken down by sex and age group; team improvements in terms of numbers of swimmers making time standards; swim meet performance in terms of best time percentages. An assistant coach should report these statistics to the head coach. Second, being accountable means being honest. If, for example progress towards goals is going slower than hoped for, the coach should report honestly rather than trying to cover things up. This honesty tends to generate trust and short term support. (However, constantly falling short on goals, no matter how honestly reported, probably calls for a major reevaluation!) Third, being accountable means following through on promises so that people see the coach as dependable. It means “doing what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to do it.”

Using Excellent Listening Skills

Good listening means learning to understand the other person. It does not mean agreeing with the other person. Others will be more likely to come to a coach with problems and solutions when the coach develops a reputation for good listening skills. Good listening skills include the following:

- Making eye contact
- Facing the person with an open body posture
- Rephrasing from time to time to let the other person know there is understanding
- Lowering emotional levels by not interrupting and not raising the voice
- Asking “What if” questions and using “I” statements rather than “you” statements

Being Professional

Wear appropriate clothing, use good writing skills, speak clearly, be early, and pursue coaching education and certification. These and other attributes mentioned throughout this manual will help the coach present him or herself as a professional.

“Over Time”

How much time does it take to earn trust, credibility and respect? Certainly a coach cannot demand these attributes but simply must be patient. The younger the coach is, the more difficult it is. With athletes, a good axiom to live by is this: “They don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” (Attributed to Don Swartz, a world class coach in the 70’s.)



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Part 3: The Role of the Coach

Topic Questions:

1. What is the coach's role in character-building?
2. What is a "fun" environment?
3. What is the proper emphasis in competition?
4. What are the dominant values that coaches teach swimmers?

The objectives and goals the coach establishes should reflect the needs of the swimmers, the needs of the coach and the needs of the program.

The coach will have many specific objectives, but each could probably be grouped into four major categories:

1. To provide personal and social development for lifetime skills.
2. To develop and improve the technical and physical skills of swimming.
3. To provide a fun and enjoyable environment.
4. To orient young people to competition.

Providing Personal and Social Development for Lifetime Skills

Acquiring life skills is often listed as a major benefit of participation in a swim program. These skills include such things as championship behavior and accountability, work ethic and self-discipline, time management, commitment and loyalty. These are the life skills that swimmers often mention years after their swimming careers have ended. After the parents, a coach is often the most important and influential figure in the development of the athlete. A coach spends a great deal of "quality time" with athletes. Coaches are role models whether they want to be or not. The key to the development of lifetime skills is the quality of the leadership that is provided. We often hear people say that "sport builds character." In fact, in the sports area it is the coach, not the sport itself that is most influential in building and/or shaping a young person's character. Think about the desired traits. A coach should not be afraid to talk about these characteristics with the athletes and be sure to reinforce and model these traits himself. Look for the "teachable moments" to point out or talk about positive actions or stories to illustrate points. Open dialogue can reinforce the positive, aid in problem solving and build unity and trust.

How influential is the coach upon the swimmers? Well, in most cases, the swimmers will follow the coach's instructions because he or she is the coach and they believe the coach knows what is best. A coach's words need to be consistent with the coach's actions. For example, a coach must be supportive of team policies and have clear consequences for violations of policies. The coach must respect team and facility policies as well as have the athletes follow the policies.

Be sensitive to issues of athlete encouragement and discipline. Some swimmers may not feel bad about losing and are able to cope without any problems, while other swimmers may be devastated with a loss. Similarly, some young people may be insecure and need frequent signs of approval, while others may be quite confident and need only occasional comments. Be very aware of situations that could be perceived as bullying. What may seem funny, sarcastic or harmless can be quite devastating to some athletes. If athletes are bullying a teammate, the best response may be to defend the athlete being bullied. Most athletes do not want to go against what the coach is doing or saying.

Developing and Improving the Technical Skills of Swimming

Parents bring young, beginning swimmers to a swim program because they need to learn basic swimming skills such as water safety, basic swimming strokes and how to breathe properly. As they progress, their skills need to be refined and they can begin to learn and practice the basics of general conditioning and fitness. Later, the swimmers add additional advanced skills and train more specifically for competition and particular events. The role of the coach is to teach age and ability appropriate progressive skills to the swimmers.

Providing a Fun and Enjoyable Environment

Research conducted by USA Swimming indicates that fun is an essential component of competitive swimming. In fact, young swimmers have indicated that fun is the number one reason that they participate in swimming. At times spontaneous, frivolous, carefree fun is acceptable and desirable. At other times fun should come from the satisfaction of



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meeting a challenge and improving through hard work. The joy of mastering a flip turn or being able to swim an entire series of repeats without taking extra rest provides considerable satisfaction. Having a coach recognize improvement and achievement increases the enjoyment. Plan to provide an enjoyable environment. It can be as easy as starting practices with a smile and sincere “glad to see you today.” Ask the swimmers what they think is fun and then try to incorporate some of their ideas into the practices. Remember, even seemingly frivolous activities need to be planned and organized for safety. “Fun” is discussed more extensively in Section 4: Developing an Athlete Centered Philosophy.

Orienting Young People to Competition

The proper emphasis in competition should be the process of competition rather than the outcome or the winning or losing. The outcome depends upon many factors. Outcome can be affected by the physical maturity, innate ability, psychological preparation, skill level and conditioning of each swimmer. Additionally, individual race strategy and uncontrollable physical conditions such as temperature or lane assignment can affect the result. The swimmers can only be responsible for themselves and their abilities, not for all the other factors that affect the outcome. They certainly cannot control what other swimmers do! Additionally, only one person can win each race. Does this mean that everyone else in the race was a failure? Certainly not! In fact, the winner might not have achieved personal goals or shown improvement while the losers may have done both. If swimmers are only responsible for themselves and their abilities, then each person can be successful by meeting his or her personal goals. Goal setting is discussed later in this course. For now, it is important to understand that emphasizing personal development rather than race outcome is the proper way to orient young people to competition. Respect effort and improvement and always emphasize the long term process of development. Remember, process first, outcome second.

Dominant Values that Coaches Teach to Swimmers

- Competition and striving to do one’s best is fun.
- Learning and improving swimming skills is a valuable activity.
- Swimming is an excellent lifetime sport and part of a healthy lifestyle.
- Setting and meeting personal and team goals is rewarding.
- Cooperation and support among teammates during practice and meets is important.
- Practices are essential steps in an athlete’s long term development.
- Swimming, training and competing are worthwhile and pleasurable activities.
- The courage to extend oneself and take risks to become better is worthwhile.



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Part 4: Developing an Athlete Centered Philosophy

Topic Questions:

1. What does it mean to coach according to needs?
2. How can the coach increase the fun in swimming?
3. How can the coach manage behavior problems?
4. What is the value of diversity and inclusion?

Meeting Physical and Personal Needs of Swimmers

The specific needs of swimmers on the team can be grouped into two major categories:

- Physical Needs
- Personal Needs

Physical needs for swimmers include:

- learning proper stroke mechanics and breathing patterns
- developing endurance, strength, speed and power
- combining the right amounts of work and rest throughout the season to reach a competitive peak performance.

Personal needs such as helping swimmers to develop life skills, and learning to compete were described in Section 3, The Role of the Coach. Other personal needs include:

- the need to feeling worthy, accepted and respected
- the need to learn, grow and experience new challenges, successes and pleasures
- the need to feel physically secure
- the need for change and variation

How do these needs of the swimmers affect coaching behavior? Does the coach's style positively reflect the dedication to meet the needs of the swimmers? Here are some examples to think about. Allowing young swimmers to compete exclusively in events in which they already excel will hinder their need to develop and grow. Boring practice routines that never vary do not meet the need for change and variation, while constantly changing and slightly chaotic practices may not provide the continuity and security the swimmers need to feel comfortable and secure.

People feel good about themselves when they are able to accomplish a task. Physical development and performance can be self-rewarding and self-fueling. Conversely, people tend to not feel so good about themselves when they are unable to accomplish tasks. A lack of development and success tends to be self-defeating and the swimmers may stop trying or give up swimming altogether.

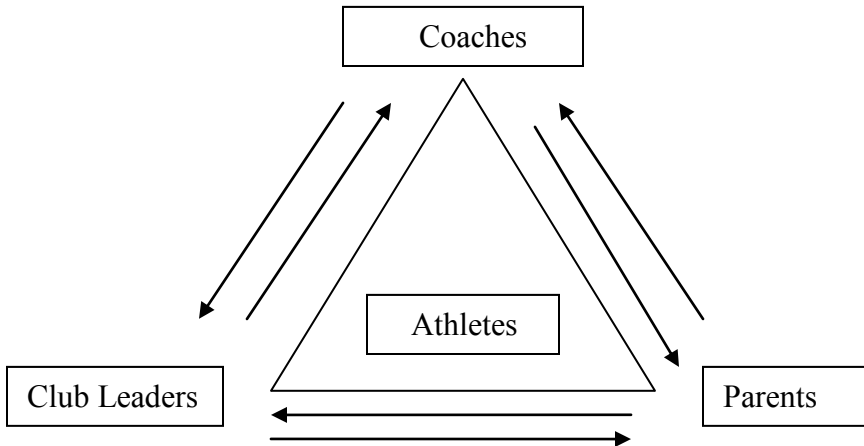
The coach also has needs, such as the need for personal satisfaction and recognition. However, the coach must not allow personal needs to overshadow those of the swimmers. The coach's role is to help the swimmers develop. You will be most successful when you consider the needs of the swimmers as the most important and coach accordingly.

The Triangle

In an athlete-centered program the goal of the parents, coaches and club administrators should be to support the athletes and focus attention on meeting the needs of the athletes. Visualize a triangle with the athletes in the middle. Strive to make all decisions with this question in mind: "what is best for the athletes?"



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Understanding and Identifying Why Kids Swim

We know from past research conducted by USA Swimming that kids stay in swimming because it is fun and quit because it is not fun. This is a bit of an oversimplification, but it is important for coaches to know what it is that makes swimming fun for athletes.

1. Recognize that fun can be incorporated into practice without detracting from the training

Often, fun and hard practices are viewed as being on separate ends of a spectrum. But, from research, USA Swimming found that kids do not define fun as goofing around at practice. Instead, fun is found in things such as being part of a team, accepting and meeting challenges, experiencing success and having an encouraging coach.

2. Promote a team concept

Although swimming is usually thought of as an individual sport, kids report enjoying the team aspect of swimming such as relays and cheering for each other. There are an unlimited number of things coaches can do to help foster a 'team spirit'. Examples include:

- create a team identity
- organize social functions
- help the athletes identify team goals for practice and competition
- reward/reinforce behaviors that demonstrate a team emphasis

3. Be aware of the need to provide external fun for younger athletes

For most young athletes, participation is not fun in itself. These athletes need other 'things' from coaches, parents and teammates to provide and enhance their fun in swimming. As mentioned in the previous section, sometimes spontaneous, frivolous, carefree fun is acceptable and desirable. At other times fun should come from the satisfaction of meeting a challenge and improving through hard work. Even for young swimmers, accepting and meeting a tough challenge can be fun. Recognition from the coach and teammates enhances the experience even more. In addition, kids identified such things as relays in practice, racing, earning 'game time' on Fridays and practice competitions as 'fun'. Some of these, and other, sources of fun should be a consistent part of swimming. When in doubt, ask the athletes what they enjoy most about swimming.

4. Be aware of what is discouraging for swimmers

Being aware of what is discouraging for athletes and taking steps to avoid these things (if possible) will enhance the athletes' overall enjoyment of swimming and desire to continue in the sport. Teaching swimmers to overcome obstacles and meet challenges will encourage rather than discourage. For example, helping the athlete set realistic time goals will, with hard work, increase his or her chance of achieving the goal. Note that 'getting slower times than my goal' was rated as the #1 reason swimming is not fun.



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5. Ensure the social aspect is present for females; Talk with males about self-referenced success

Two suggestions for coaches arise from the finding regarding gender differences in athlete perception of sources of fun: 1) Take extra steps to ensure that the social aspect of swimming is part of the swimming environment for females. 2) Discuss with males the need to measure success in swimming based on themselves as opposed to referencing it to others or to final outcome as males have a tendency to focus more on winning and outcome.

6. Work to enhance each athlete's perception of ability

Kids who perceive themselves as having a relatively high ability level rated a variety of 'fun items' significantly higher than those with a low perception of ability. It is beneficial, therefore, for coaches to make a conscious effort to enhance each athlete's perception of ability and competence. A few suggestions on how to accomplish this:

- Provide positive reinforcement and feedback regarding skill improvement, demonstration of appropriate behaviors and effort exhibited by the athlete.
- Structure the environment so the athlete has an opportunity to experience success (i.e., individual goals, focus on performance not outcome).
- Attribute poor performances to effort (which the athlete has control over) as opposed to ability (which they may view as relatively stable).
- Attribute poor performances to improper technique or failed racing strategy.
- Identify areas that need improvement and strategies for the athlete to improve so he or she knows how to enhance ability. Provide time for the athlete to practice the skills.

Managing Athlete Behavior

In spite of the coach's best efforts to provide an organized, fun, challenging and supportive environment the coach may still be confronted with disciplinary or behavioral issues. These issues may be rooted in causes well outside of the coach's control, such as in the athlete's family, school or peer relationships, but the problems can still manifest themselves in and around the pool. In spite of a coach's resolve to stay positive and maintain self-control, the coach may find himself getting angry or frustrated with a child who acts out, refuses to cooperate or engages in a power struggle. Children who act out are often seeking attention from the coach or from their peers.

- Try to catch these kids doing something right rather than constantly reprimanding them for doing wrong.
- Use time-out by having the child sit out an activity until he or she feels able to rejoin the group. Be sure to remain calm and explain why the child is being placed in time-out.
- Make use of consequences that make sense to swimmers. If a child is hitting other kids with a kickboard, remove the kickboard.
- Try to avoid using punishment laps or physical demands such as push-ups that have no relationship to the behavior to be changed.
- Above all, try very hard to be even handed and fair.
- Form a partnership with the parents. Approach parents openly and humbly asking for assistance in working with a difficult child. The parents probably know their child's difficulties.

A coach will not like all of the swimmers equally. Some are more "coachable" than others. They may be more even tempered or respond more openly. They give more effort or they may be more competitive. Beware of giving undue attention to the star swimmers, especially when they are very young. (More on this in Chapter 4, Growth and Development.) Remember that the coach's role is to provide opportunities for all of the swimmers to grow and develop their skills.

Striving for Diversity in Your Program

The whole program benefits when the team is more diverse. There are many ways to strive for diversity including recruiting and welcoming swimmers from various socio-economic, ethnic or racial backgrounds and bringing swimmers with mental or physical disabilities into the program.

- **Racial, Ethnic and Socioeconomic Diversity**

The sport of swimming is concerned with those who don't have access to swimming and is making a commitment to impacting people of all backgrounds. Swimming is not a visible sport among the economically disadvantaged



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within the inner cities, the same segment that provides a rich talent pool for sports such as basketball and football. Imagine the potential and possibilities. As a coach reaches out to minority swimmers, remember that very few kids want to be the “only”: the only boy, the only girl, the only African-American, the only Asian or the only Caucasian. If a coach has an “only” on the team, the coach must make a special effort to support and include the athlete. Engage the team leaders in accepting the athlete, knowing that their leadership will set the tone. Also, involve the parents and make sure the parents of the “only” are welcomed and included. The whole team benefits from inclusion and diversity. New friendships and experiences enrich everyone as they come to understand their commonalities.

- **Swimmers with a Disability**

The same can be said of including swimmers with disabilities. Athletes with disabilities who join USA Swimming clubs benefit from better sport-specific coaching, more rigorous training, more competition in practice and higher expectations than they are likely to receive in other settings. Other benefits include socialization opportunities, greater independence in activities of daily living and improved ability to cope with limitations imposed by disabilities. The opportunity to be part of a team is especially important to athletes whose educational experiences may have been routinely individualized. The opportunity to demonstrate ability and educate others can be a very satisfying experience for persons who are frequently judged on the basis of what they cannot do.

“Able-bodied” swimmers learn to appreciate the concept of focusing on ability rather than limitations by observing the similarities between themselves and their teammates who have disabilities. These include common motives for swimming, shared performance goals and similar responses to training regimens. Some coaches report that including athletes with disabilities increases motivation and decreases whining by other swimmers during practice.

- **Have the Same Expectations**

Coaches should have the same general expectations for swimmers regardless of background or disability. All swimmers should be expected to comply with team rules and policies, demonstrate a good work ethic and exhibit good sportsmanship. All swimmers should contribute to the team by supporting their teammates and helping with team activities. Conversely, all swimmers should enjoy the same opportunities as other swimmers, such as promotion to a more advanced practice group, participation in meets and participation in team social events.

For more on working with Swimmers with a Disability, see “Resources/Team Administration”



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Part 5: Ethical Behavior and Leadership

Topic Questions:

1. What is the role of the coach in teaching team and sport rules?
2. How can the coach be an effective role model?

Know and Enforce the Rules and Policies of the Team and the Sport

Coaches should establish team rules and customs that promote desired behaviors with clear guidelines regarding the consequences for misbehavior. Team rules and traditions help foster a sense of team unity and feelings of pride in being part of the team. Athletes should learn to view themselves as one member of a large team that functions best when all abide by team guidelines. It goes without saying that the coach should respect and abide by the rules and policies so that the athletes learn by example. Take advantage of “teachable moments” (i.e. teaching a value within the context of a real-life situation) to demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

The coach is educating the whole person, not just the swimmer in the pool. By establishing clear standards and clear values, the coach establishes expectations. The coach should be consistent in holding athletes accountable to these standards. It is alright and even appropriate to acknowledge that there are issues where the coach and swimmers may have differences of opinion or even different values. Recognize that young people are greatly influenced by television, the music they listen to and their peers. Recognizing these sources of influence does not mean accepting or condoning inappropriate behavior and values. Within the context of team rules and policies, athletes can be encouraged, as they mature, to question and learn to use their own judgment and decision-making skills. However, it is still up to the coach to structure the team as an opportunity for athletes to learn and practice positive behaviors.

The coach must know and be current with the rules of the sport. Remember that there can be annual rule changes following the USA Swimming House of Delegates meeting held every September. These rule changes normally go into effect on January 1 of the following year. The rule changes are posted on the USA Swimming website (www.usaswimming.org) and listed in the rule book which all registered coaches receive after January 1. Each Local Swimming Committee (LSC) also has its own rules and policies that govern such things as swim meet formats and entry procedures. If the coach travels with swimmers to compete in a different LSC, the coach needs to be aware of the rules and policies governing the competition. Swimmers and parents look to the coach to be knowledgeable and to educate them on the rules and any rule changes. Teaching the rules to the athletes and the parents is one of the coach’s prime responsibilities.

The Coach as a Leader and Role Model

The coach is a role model: a guide, a leader and a teacher. The coach’s behavior, attitude and actions toward other coaches, swimmers, parents and officials will be scrutinized. The coach is not automatically accorded respect and trust just because he or she is the coach. Respect and trust must be earned over time. Positive actions and appropriate language and attire set the tone. As a coach, monitor your behavior and comments and try to see yourself through other’s eyes. A coach doesn’t have to “get dressed up” to coach, but neat, clean team attire goes a long way toward presenting a professional appearance.

Sometimes it may be difficult to separate roles, especially if the coach is also a parent of swimmers or if the coach is close in age to the swimmers. In these situations, monitor social choices and be aware that you are the coach both on and off the pool deck. Most experienced coaches advise a coach not to socialize with the swimmers and limit socialization with the parents of the swimmers. Be open and approachable and cultivate a culture of trust and respect, but develop and maintain a professional rather than personal relationship with swimmers and parents. Just as athletes should be held accountable to high standards of behavior, the coach must hold him or herself similarly accountable.



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Part 6: Professional and Personal Development

Topic Questions:

1. What is professional development and how does one go about it?
2. What is meant by personal development?
3. What tools does the coach have for personal development?

Professional Development

Professional development is the pursuit of developing oneself into the best coach one can be. There are two basic components to professional development: experience and education. Set goals to improve both the knowledge base and the experience base.

Dr. James Counsilman asked this poignant question: "Are you a coach with 10 years of experience, or are you a coach with one year of experience ten times?" Do you repeat each season like the last or do you seek different methods? Are you continually learning and evaluating? (Incidentally, if you don't know who Dr. James "Doc" Counsilman was, take the first step in your professional development to learn who he was, what he did and what he taught.)

A professional coach constantly seeks new information. Information is widely available through printed resources, websites, other coaches and clinics. USA Swimming's website (www.usaswimming.org) and the American Swimming Coaches Association's (ASCA) website (www.swimmingcoach.org) offer quality educational materials for free and for purchase. ASCA offers home study courses, dozens of dvd's and books, over 1000 audio files and a certification program. Clinics are also offered by both organizations and there are numerous privately run clinics. See [ASCA's clinics section](#) for a list of current clinics being offered.

Personal Development

Personal development is the pursuit of goals outside the realm of coaching. Here is a simple question that may be hard to answer: Are you a coach, or are you a person who coaches? Here is another question: Does coaching define you, or do you define you? Coaches have a passion for coaching and hopefully those who are interested in making coaching a career will have the motivation, the tools, the finances and the support to keep coaching for as long as they enjoy it.

Coaches already have one of the most important tools necessary. Coaches are among the finest goal-setting facilitators on the planet! The trick is to take what you teach to your athletes and apply it to yourself.

First, think about where your personal values and goals come from. Do some thinking, reading and talking with friends and family. Then, take the following steps:

1. Decide what you value. Make a list. Visit it often and evaluate it.
2. Ask yourself, "What goals can I set to manifest what I value?"
3. Write your goals down and put them where you will see them often. Make sure there is a target date for completion of each goal. Make sure your goal is attainable and measurable.
4. List the objectives or steps you need to take to meet each goal and set a timeline for completing each step. If your goal is big and distant, give yourself some reasonable short term goals to move you toward your big goal.
5. Set aside time to work on your personal goals.

A Note about Finances

Any discussion of personal development would be incomplete without a mention of personal finances. As a young coach, finances may not be a primary issue. However, this is the best time to begin financial planning habits for the future. Developing investment accounts for home ownership, a child's education, reserves for emergencies and retirement is best done sooner than later even if you start very modestly. Seek the advice of a trusted financial planner and set financial goals.