

## Improving Swimmer Confidence

One of the most frequent mental hang-ups of swimmers I trained with over the years was a low sense of self-confidence. And oddly, this lack of self-belief was common with the swimmers who were committed, who showed up every day, put in the work, and yet, still struggled to have the self-belief necessary to perform at their peak when competitions rolled around.

There are things you can do. We are not pre-disposed with a certain type of self-confidence, and then tasked to deal with it for the rest of our lives. The intensity and amount that we believe in ourselves comes from our actions. It's something we have control over.

Below are ten things or actions you can undertake to get that self-confidence moving in the right direction:

**1. Stop thinking about the scary stuff.** How often do we get wrapped up in all of the scary things that may happen with our swimming, but very rarely ever do? Avoid seeking out the possible consequences of a poor performance and instead focus on the things you can control. How you prepare, what you eat pre-race, your technique, and so on.

**2. Take it one step at a time.** Thinking about that big glorious goal at the end of the line is what keeps us motivated on those days when the last thing we want to do is bang out another 5k at the pool. But it can also create an intimidating shadow that can crush confidence – “I only have three months until Nationals? I'll never get the work in necessary to achieve my goals.” Let those thoughts go and focus only on what is directly in front of you.

**3. Create a new habit.** Habits are insanely powerful things, and direct as much as 40-45% of our daily actions, so why not harness that power to do some good with your swimming and give you a nice little jolt of confidence along the way? It doesn't have to be something massive either; something such as, packing your meals for the following day the night before. Or stretching for an extra ten minutes at home before bed.

**4. Remember the times you kicked butt.** We all have those days where we doubt ourselves, doubt our abilities, doubt everything we are doing with our swimming. In those moments sit down and write out a handful of times where – in spite of the odds against you – you were able to rise the occasion. You are stronger than you give yourself credit for, and sometimes you just need to remind yourself.

**5. Aim for success.** If we aim to carry out our swimming careers only aiming to avoid the worst outcomes, and not chasing after the awesome stuff, then we create a type of self-fulfilling prophecy. “Common sense” would suggest lowering the bar, or decreasing expectations in order to avoid becoming disappointed. Instead, aim towards succeeding, to perform well, and achieving big things with your swimming.

**6. Focus on solutions.** Stuck with your training and swimming? Not getting the results you feel like you should be getting? Direct your thoughts into finding a solution. Seems obvious, but it's stunning how many swimmers would rather cross their arms and sulk about a predicament than seek to find a way out. You will be surprised at the creative superpowers that melon of yours is capable of when you redirect it from dwelling into finding a path forwards.

**7. Do something better/faster every day.** Each and every day at practice you should strive to do something better and/or faster than you have ever done before. It doesn't have to be a best time, but it should be something that gives you meaningful confidence. This will give you a consistent and confidence-building string of successes and victories that will keep the fire in your belly burning brightly.

**8. Master the details.** Get lost in a couple of the details of your swimming. The way your hand catches the water. A breathing pattern. Doing 10m breakouts on every wall. Pick a couple things to completely and utterly nail, and you will find this devotion to excellence will naturally spread outwards to the other parts of your swimming. Excellence is contagious, and the geyser of confidence that will explode from mastering the technical elements will be huge.

**9. Be positive.** This is going to sound a little bit corny or cliché, but be a positive influence on the environment around you. Compliment your teammates on a good set. Help a youngster on the team with a technique hang-up. Be the one to stand up and volunteer when the flags need to get put up. Being positive isn't just a set of thoughts; it's a way of living. When you start acting positively, these actions feed into your energy and thoughts.

**10. Decide the swimmer you want to be.** Having principles is important in life. Surely you have a set of them for how you live your life. Your own code for how you treat others, for how you do things, for how you carry yourself. You can do the same thing for your swimming. Write out what kind of swimmer you want to be. Will you be the swimmer how shows up early? Or who will always do just one more rep on a seemingly impossible set? Write down the principles you want to have as a swimmer, and ruthlessly hold on to them.

Which of the above tactics will you try moving forward to be a more confident swimmer?