

C is for Confidence

Mentally preparing yourself to swim fast can be as easy as A-B-C. Sport psychologist Aimee Kimball brings usaswimming.org her third installment of the ABCs of mental training — “C” is for Confidence.

Confidence is a Choice

Many people think the only way to be confident is to be successful. While it is easier to believe in your abilities when you have had proven success, it is not the only way to feel a sense of confidence. *Confidence is a choice*. It comes from choosing to focus on your strengths and knowing that you are good. It comes from choosing to be positive with yourself. It comes from focusing on what you need to do to swim well rather than uncontrollable, situational factors. Most importantly, confidence comes when you're not worrying about being *the* best, but when you are focusing on being *your* best.

How Can I Create Confidence?

The first step in creating confidence is preparation. If you fully engage physically and mentally in practice, you will feel more prepared when competing. Focused practices allow you to trust that you did everything you could to enable yourself to perform your best.

Second, it is important to act confidently. Our mind reacts to what our body does. If your head is down, your muscles are tense or your shoulders are hunched, your mind will sense your self-doubt. So always make sure your body language and your communication with yourself and others portrays confidence. Even when you don't feel confident, act and think confidently.

Finally, realize you don't need other people to tell you that you are good. Many athletes wait for coaches to tell them they are swimming well in order to believe in themselves. You may *want* others to tell you that you are good, but it's not something you *need*. You already know when you swim well, hearing it from others is just icing on the cake.

Make it great