

Parents

Parents are the most important factor in their children's swimming careers. Below is a widely reprinted article that addresses many of the considerations (cautions) of that vital role:

The Ten Commandments of Swim Parents (by Rose Snyder of USA Swimming)

1. *Thou shalt not impose thy ambitions on thy child.*

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is that every person can strive to do their personal best.

2. *Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.*

There is only one question to ask your child: "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

3. *Thou shalt not coach thy child.*

You have taken your child to a professional coach; do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love, and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. That is not your area. This will only confuse your child about whose sport it is and prevent the swimmer/coach bond from forming.

4. *Thou shalt have only positive things to say at a swim meet.*

If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize your child or the coach.

5. *Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.*

A first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 IM can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it.

6. *Thou shalt not criticize the officials.*

If you do not have the time or the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.

7. *Honor thy child's coach.*

The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child; it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

8. *Thou shalt not jump from team to team.*

The water isn't necessarily bluer at the other team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized for a long, long time by the teammates they leave behind. Oftentimes swimmers who do switch teams never do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

9. *Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.*

Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. This does not make me a failure, in fact, I am very proud of that swim."

10. *Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.*

There are 225,000 athletes in United States Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in about 4,300. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he coaches. Chances are, he was not an Olympian, but still got enough out of swimming that he wants to pass that love for the sport on to others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medal they may have won. Swimming builds good people and you should be happy your child wants to participate.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Love your children unconditionally
- Refrain from coaching your children; doing so creates confusion regarding why they are swimming (for their own development or their parents' ego needs?) and whom they should listen to when parents' advice contradicts coaches' advice
- Provide emotional, logistical, and financial support
- Teach sound diet, sleep hygiene, and positive self-talk
- Communicate with the coach and encourage your swimmers to do the same
- Emphasize process over product
- Praise effort and perseverance
- Focus on challenges met and life lessons learned
- Volunteer at home and away meets and for Parent BOD
- Check the family folders regularly
- Attend parent meetings
- Utilize goal-setting meetings opportunities
- Emphasize responsible management of all swimmer responsibilities: family, school, swimming, other

Communication

Coaches' communication with parents--may include any or all of the following modes: emails, texts, website postings, family folders, telephone conversations, group or team parent meetings, and one-on-one meetings. For transaction of routine business, emails and website postings will be relied upon.

Parents' communication with coaches--

1. Please email, telephone, catch us after practice, or request a meeting. Please do not communicate with coaches--or swimmers--during practice unless it is an emergency; practice is the swimmers' time and needs to be as free from distraction as possible for both swimmers and coaches. If your message is simple and brief, before practice may work, but coaches will be setting up and preparing for practice so any issue that may be more involved should be addressed after practice or at a pre-arranged time.
2. If you have a concern regarding an event that was reported to have occurred at practice, please refrain from forming conclusions until you have gathered all relevant information. The following communication hierarchy will minimize the likelihood of your receiving misinformation and maximize the opportunity for an expedient resolution:
 - a. Coach of record
 - b. Head coach Neil Romney
 - c. Executive director Eric Abts

Parents' communication with swimmers—as mentioned above, we ask that parents refrain from communicating with their swimmers during practice both verbally and non-verbally. Parents are encouraged to view practice when their schedules permit but should do so from the observation window in the Y's lobby or from the spectator stands in the pool's viewing area. To minimize distraction and enhance safety, parents are asked to stay off the pool deck during practice.

Burnout

Often treated as a distinct psychological state, "burnout" usually describes the waning motivation that accompanies the conclusion that the costs of swim training outweigh the benefits. This conclusion can be driven by myriad factors including failure to improve; illness, injury, or emotional distress; prioritizing product over process; parental pressure; changing interests; and unrealistic expectations. While burnout is often attributed to an athlete's doing too much, it is just as likely to result from doing too little. For example, a 14-year-old girl who has been swimming competitively for six years and is a regular qualifier for her state championships practices fairly hard 8 hours/week, a significant physical workload and time investment but less than the 10, 12, or more hours per week that many of her competitors at that age and ability are investing. Consequently, this girl, who was competitive at a younger age, is now falling behind her peers, while still working hard in the pool and sacrificing other opportunities to do so. It's not surprising that she may grow frustrated and question whether it is worth it.

Reframing such scenarios may reduce “burnout” by allowing the athlete to more clearly identify the factors contributing to her growing frustration and adjust her goals or her investment accordingly. Maybe the swimmer decides to recommit to the sport; or to continue at her current level but with realigned goals; or to reduce her training but continue swimming with less-demanding goals such as health, fitness, or preparation for lower-level competitions; or to take a break to re-evaluate. Regardless, she is likely to feel more settled and comfortable with her decision if she objectively assesses the factors underlying her frustration.

The failure to improve, or the perception that one is not improving as rapidly as one should, underlies many cases of burnout. That is one of the reasons we emphasize instruction over training at our lower levels and continue to prioritize technique as swimmers advance. The instances of 10- or 12-year-old champions’ quitting the sport are legion and almost always result, at least in part, from overvaluation of winning (product) and an undervaluation of the self-discipline to defer gratification and the diligence to apply oneself to the task day in and day out (process). Often those age-group champions who exit the sport were successful at young ages because they were bigger and stronger than their peers or swam more; in either case, however, it is likely that they did not develop the highly efficient strokes that characterize the sustained improvement curve of their peers who eventually surpass them.