

SWIM PARENTS

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Ageing Up

◆My Eight Year Old Was The Fastest Swimmer In The Zone Until He Turned Nine. Now He Is Continually Being Beaten Since He Is The Youngest In His Age Group. How Can I, As A Parent, Keep Him Getting Discouraged?◆

Answered by: Bill Thompson, ASCA Level 5 Age Group Coach, De Anza Cupertino Swim Team, California.

Every age group swimmer goes through the trials and tribulations of ◆aging up◆. It is difficult for a swimmer, who was the top of his age group, to readjust to swimming against older and faster swimmers. Often times, a child will have difficulties swimming in this new age bracket.

It is important to communicate with your child◆s coach when a situation like this occurs. When you feel that your child is becoming discouraged, you should inform your child◆s coach of your concern. Chances are the coach has sensed the discouragement also. It is a common response to ◆aging up◆. Remember how you felt as a freshman in high school, worshipping the upper-classmen from afar?

After you have informed the coach of the problem, you and your child need to evaluate why he is participating in swimming. Your child probably became a swimmer because it was an activity where he was better than the average swimmer, he found it to be fun, and he could please you, the parent. He did not become a swimmer to win.

When your child is making the transition to an older age group, look for positive aspects, other than winning, such as improving his times, techniques and developing new skills. Changing age groups can mean the discovery of new talents, racing in different distances, new events and tougher competition.

Most importantly, no one in swimming has ever won all of his races. Only one swimmer can finish first in a race and sometimes we place too much importance on winning. A youngster is a winner when he can face a challenge, compete and try his best. Swimmers win when they set a goal for themselves and make a commitment to work towards realizing that goal. A well-balanced individual needs to accept defeat and disappointment as graciously as victory. How can one savor the ◆thrill of victory◆ without the occasional ◆agony of defeat◆?

Encourage your swimmer to have faith in himself and his coach and he will adjust with time. I think it can be very good for him to believe he can win again◆someday. If winning is important to him in the months or years to come, he will work for it.