

## **Being a Supportive Swim Parent**

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The outline will share 4 buckets of support that parents should use to help their child in the sport of swimming.

Before beginning, there are two mindsets to keep throughout the presentation

1. What is the athlete triangle?
  - There are 3 people that play a role in the success of a swimmer: Coach, Parent, and Swimmer
  - You, as the parent, must let everyone play their role
2. Being a sport parent is a skill
  - This means that it can be improved with practice. Parents need to have an open mind to learning how to be the best supporter of your individual child, which can change as they progress through the sport and as a person

#### **Bucket #1- Support at home**

1. Nutrition- Teach them and learn together about the best nutrition for being an athlete
2. Sleep- Help them recover and learn new skills  
Both nutrition and sleep become more important as the kids get older. If you need help, please reach out to an expert in your area.
3. Help them be responsible for their swimming- Some examples: Allow them to make decisions about their swimming, pack their own bag, and talk to the coach when they will miss practice.
4. Remember, when you talk, they listen- Whether you realize it not, they are always listening. Avoid complaining about the coach, the officials, comparison to other swimmers, and time and money spent.

#### **Bucket #2- Support for the team**

1. Supporting the coaching staff- Examples, let the coach do the coaching, if you have a question make sure you ask, show respect to the coach so that your child will also, and a way to allow each person of the athlete triangle play their role.
2. Volunteering- Find ways to help support the team. It could be volunteering when your team hosts a meet and timing at meets.
3. Team culture- Parents are a part of the culture of a team. Help the coaches, swimmers, and team create a positive environment that helps the kids succeed.
4. Supporting while in the stands- This includes being a parent at practice and at swim meets. Things to keep in mind; kids can read your body language and avoid being a distraction to your swimmer and other swimmers.

#### **Bucket #3- Support for yourself (the parent)**

1. Being a sport parent should be fun- This is a journey with your child that won't last forever. It will be challenging at times, but also an opportunity to learn about your child in new ways.
2. Be coachable as a parent- Sport parents need to be open to learning and making changes to how they parent. This is also an opportunity to role model key skill to your kids.

*"Your child's success or lack of success in sports does not indicate what kind of a parent you are. But having an athlete that is coachable, respectful, a great teammate, mental tough, resilient and tries their best IS a direct reflection of your parenting."*

3. Control circle- This is a life skill for everyone to learn. It is important to recognize what you can and what you can't control in situations.  
Uncontrollable examples: Kids dropping time, disqualifications, being selected for relays  
Controllable examples: Your reaction to a disqualification, how you support the coach, what your reward

#### **Bucket #4- Support for your child**

1. Let them make mistakes- This is a life skill and one of our jobs as parents. When they make mistakes, this is how they learn to improve.  
*"Students gain lasting self-confidence, not by being protected from failure, but by learning they can survive it." – Tony Wagner*
2. Coach vs. parent role- Reminder, that everyone needs to play their role. Your role as a parent is something that the coaches can't do. If you are playing that role, the child is missing that important piece.
3. Have an identity outside of swimming- Work on improving in other areas, that will help them improve in swimming. If they only identify as a swimmer and they fail, some kids can take that to mean they are a failure.
4. Body language- The kids notice how you feel about their race or their practice, even without your saying something. They will create their own narrative.  
*"What you DO speaks so LOUD that I CANNOT hear what you SAY." – Ralph Waldo Emerson*
5. Post race review- Reminder, this is the job of the coach.
6. Create habits for future success- Warm up/Warm down, pack snacks for meets and practice, talk to the coach before and after races, and allow them to learn that they can survive their mistakes.
7. Notice the small wins- As kids make progress and grow, it may not always be huge changes. A lot of little wins can add up to big wins. For example- they add time in the 50 free but they did a flip turn for the first time in a swim meet.
8. Teach them to think of others- Teach them to be good teammates. This helps the team, creates a great culture, when they help others-the others will also help them, and can help kids that tend to overthink and get anxious about themselves.

**Challenge for the parents:** You can choose to try one of these throughout the season or try all of them at different points. It is your challenge to choose

1. Ask your child their thoughts  
*"Listen to understand, not to respond"*
2. If you must say something after a race, don't mention time or results
3. If you don't know, ask a coach
4. There is no perfect parent, allow yourself grace to learn

Follow up questions to think about or discuss with someone else involved in your child's swimming:

1. From what was shared, what is something you do well and why?
2. What is one thing that was shared that surprised you or you hadn't thought of before?
3. Which parent challenge will you try first?