

DAWLISH SWIMMING AND LIFE SAVING ASSOCIATION



President Norman Storey

Founded 1865

Am I a Pressure Parent?

Some of the questions in this survey were taken by the ASA (GB) and some are questions that Steve Parry (Bronze medal 2004 Olympics in 200 fly) has asked, taken from 32 years of observations and experience. If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, you may be in danger of pressurising your child. The parents' role is critical and should be supportive at all times to ensure a positive experience for your child.

1. Is winning more important to you than it is for your child?
2. When your child has a poor swim, is your disappointment obvious, such as through body language or vocal tones?
3. Do you feel you are the one to psyche your child up before competition?
4. Do you conduct "post-mortems" immediately after competition or practice?
5. Do you wait for the privacy of your car during the journey home to conduct your post-mortem?
6. Do you feel that winning is the only way your child can enjoy the sport?
7. Do you feel that you have to force your child to have to go training?
8. If you did not achieve any sporting excellence yourself, are you living your life through the achievements of your child?
9. Are your child's goals more important to you than they are to your child?

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10. Do you find yourself wanting to interfere with coaching and instructions during practice or competition, thinking that you could do better?
11. Do you find yourself disliking your child's opponents?
12. Do you provide material rewards for performance i.e. do you pay for PB's etc?

From Mama Parry's "ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR SWIMMING PARENTS"

The 10 Commandments for Swimming Parents

1. **Thou shalt not impose thy ambitions on thy child.**
Remember that swimming is your youngster's activity. Improvement occurs at different rates for each individual. Do not judge your child's progress on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what YOU think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is that youngsters can strive to do their personal best and therefore benefit from the progress of competitive swimming.
2. **Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.**
There is only one question to ask your youngster after a practice or a competition - "Did you enjoy it". If competitions or practices are not fun your youngsters should not be forced to participate. Plus your youngster should be applauded for any good effort 2nd, 3rd, and 4th even 34th - They are all a case of "WELL DONE!"
3. **Thou shalt not coach thy child.**
You are involved in one of the few youth sports that offer professional coaching. Do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your youngster on the side. Your job is to supply love and support and a safe place to return to at the end of the day. Love and hug your youngster no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should avoid offering advice on technique or race strategy or any other area which is not yours. Above all - never pay your youngster for a performance. This will only serve to confuse your child concerning

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the reasons to strive for excellence and will weaken the swimmer-coach bond.

4. Thou shalt only say positive things at a race meet.

If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should be encouraging, but never criticise your youngster or the coach. Both of them know if mistakes have been made. Remember yelling at is not the same as cheering for.

5. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.

A first swimming competition, 1500m swim or 200m Individual Medley can be a stressful situation. It is totally acceptable for your child to be scared. Do not shout or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if he were not ready to compete in it. Remember your job is to love and support your child through all of the swimming experience.

6. Thou shalt not criticise the officials.

If you do not care to devote the time or do not have the desire to volunteer as an official, do not criticise those who are doing the best they can.

7. Honour thy child's coach.

The bond between a coach and your child is a special one, and one which contributes to your child's success as well as enjoyment. Do not criticise the coach in the presence of your child as this will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

8. Thou shalt be loyal and supportive of your team.

It is not wise for parents to move their children from club to club (unless to one with considerably more pooltime). The water is not necessarily bluer in another pool. Every club has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracised for a long time by the team mates they leave behind and are slowly received by new team-mates. Indeed, swimmers who switch teams often do no better than at their previous club.

9. Thy child shall have goals besides winning.

Most successful swimmers are those who have learned to focus on

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the process and not the outcome. Giving 100% effort is 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 - a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact I am very proud of that swim". That is the outlook to carry through life.

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

There are 250,000 registered competitive swimmers and another 150,000 in learn to swim lessons. There are only a maximum of 52 places available for the Olympic squad Every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are less than 4 out of 10,000 or 0.04%!

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