

HOW PARENTS AFFECT SUCCESS: AN ATHLETES PERSPECTIVE

From USA Swimming

A coach in Texas recently shared an exercise her swimmers completed and then shared with their parents. The exercise shows, from a swimmer's perspective, how parents and the actions of parents can affect the athlete's success.

Swimmers were asked to sit down and write out things that they love swim parents do, and things that they wish swim parents wouldn't do. All answers were written anonymously so no one would know who wrote what. This allowed the swimmer to answer the questions openly.

According to the coach, the swimmers really enjoyed getting to do this; they loved the idea of being able to show their appreciation for the great things parents do for them and the things they feel could help parents of the team become better swim parents.

The results were then shared with the parents via a letter from all of the swimmers in the group. Here are the results...notice the differences between the younger and older swimmers.

11-13 YEAR OLD SWIMMERS (AGE GROUP III PRACTICE GROUP)

Things they love and appreciate:

- When my parents encourage and support me even after a swim that I did not drop time.
- When my parents tell me to not worry about my event, just go out and have fun.
- How my parents prepare for my meets: Drive me there, take time off to go to meet, bring healthy food.
- When my parents accept that even though I added time, I still tried my best.
- When my parents don't put pressure on me.

- I like when my parents aren't among the many parents screaming really loud at the children.
- When I race he tells me to swim my own race and doesn't tell me what he thinks I need to do.
- I like how my parents encourage me to do well and encourage my swimming.
- I like it when my parents tell me they are proud of me.
- I like when my parents tell me I love you no matter what happens.

Things they don't like:

- I don't like it when other parents and my parents compare me to the other swimmers.
- I hate when parents yell at their kids for adding.
- I hate when my parents take things away from me when I add time at a meet.
- I don't like it when my parents make me cry about my swims.
- I hate when my parents get mad when I add time.
- I dislike when my parents think I didn't try my best.
- I dislike how my parents tell me things that I did wrong.
- I hate when my parents try to fix my stroke technique and try to tell me how to swim.
- I don't like when my parents yell "go" too loud and make others look.
- I don't like when my parents always think I should drop time in every event.
- I don't like when parents don't congratulate their kids, only tells them something they did bad.
- I don't like when my parents give suggestions repeatedly and they are not what my coach wants me to do.

12-14 YEAR OLD SWIMMERS (PRE-SENIOR II PRACTICE GROUP)

Things they love and appreciate:

- I like that my parents really enjoy the sport of swimming.
- I like that you take the time out of your day to take me to practice and meets.
- I like that you spend money on something I can have a future in.
- I like that my parents don't put pressure on me.

- I like how my parents support/care for me no matter what.
- I like when they make me feel better when I add time.
- I love that my parents want me to be my best.
- I love when my parents don't coach me.

Things they don't like:

- I dislike that my parents are never satisfied with my swims.
- I don't like when they don't understand you just don't drop every meet, even if my strokes look better.
- I dislike when they doubt my commitment.
- I dislike when my parents say I did badly; I am disappointed enough in myself already.
- I hate that my parents don't realize how hard I work to keep them happy.
- I hate when my parents only look at how well I do in my meets and not in practice.
- I hate that my parents have never been a swimmer, but they try to change and put down my swimming.
- I dislike when my parents get upset when I didn't get a cut even though I dropped time.
- Don't appreciate my effort when I do well.
- Don't buy healthy food for meets.
- I hate when my parents try to fix my strokes.
- I don't like when you try to make my goal times for me.