

The Importance of Communication

By Michael Chasson, President of Sun Devil Aquatics

As parents, we want the best for our children. We advocate for them and teach them to advocate for themselves. We hope that when a conflict arises the professionals working with our kids have their best interests at heart. Sometimes, when a child is really upset, it may be difficult to objectively step back and look at the situation.

It is important to allow the coaches to coach your children and not jump to snap conclusions about performance, behavior, or other issues based only on your child coming home from swimming with one perspective or your observation at a practice or a swim meet. I encourage every parent, to set up a meeting, with his or her child's coach as soon as an issue arises, to get the full story. This is true for swimmers in any group. In the past six months I have seen issues arise in almost every group that were result of poor communication between a swimmer and a coach and ultimately the parent. The issues that were resolved most quickly were the result of the parent taking action as soon as possible. If at any point a coach doesn't respond in a positive way to a request for a meeting, please let me know so I can take the appropriate action. It is not a parent's responsibility to coach their child, but it is their responsibility to be fully informed about the coaching of their child. At the same time this doesn't mean that a parent will agree with every decision or action that has taken place. I will always be available to help resolve any communication issues.

The hardest issues to resolve are those involving the effort and improvement of an older swimmer. Many swimmers will not admit they aren't giving their best effort on a regular basis. This is true in part because if the swimmer is coming to almost every practice, they believe they should improve based on that fact alone. This disregards the fact that the longer you have swum the more effort it takes to improve small amounts. It also disregards the fact that in many cases involving lack of improvement, it is the mental side of swimming that has caused the problem. This may be the result of a loss of confidence due to a plateau in their best event or seeing other swimmers improve on a different timetable. In this situation the most important things are communication with your coach and looking in the mirror and being honest with yourself.

Its important to remember that when a coach speaks to a swimmer about effort, attitude or provides correction on a skill, it's not a criticism of them as an individual. It is also not a reflection on their value to the team. Support your swimmer and support your coach, we all have the same ultimate goal for your child. We want to see them succeed, grow and enjoy every minute of their involvement in our sport.