



GAEL AQUATIC CLUB

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SWIMMING PARENTS

The following article is by Rose Snyder. It originally appeared on the Coral Springs website. The GAELS reprint the article here to remind each of us to focus on how we, as swim parents, can make the experience enjoyable and meaningful for our children.

1. **Thou shall not impose your ambition on your child.** Swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Do not judge your child's progress by the performance of other athletes and do not push them based on what you think they should be doing.
2. **Thou shall be supportive no matter what.** There is only one question to ask your child, "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun for your child, he or she should not be forced to participate.
3. **Thou shall not coach your child.** You have taken your child to a professional coach. Do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love and hug, no matter what. Leave the technical part of the job to the coach.
4. **Thou shall only have positive things to say at a swim meet.** When at a swim meet, you should cheer and applaud your child's efforts. Never criticize your child or the coach.
5. **Thou shall acknowledge thy child's fears.** A first swim meet, 500 free or 200 IM can be very stressful. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have entered him or her in the event if he or she was not ready for it.
6. **Thou shall not criticize the officials.** If you do not have the time or desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best that they can.
7. **Honor thy child's coach.** The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, which contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child; it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.
8. **Thou shall not jump from team to team.** The water isn't necessarily bluer at the other team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems and issues, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized by the teammates they leave behind. Nine times out of ten, swimmers who switch teams never do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.
9. **Thy child shall have goals besides winning.** Giving an honest effort, regardless of the outcome, is much more important than winning.
10. **Thou shall not expect thy child to become an Olympian.** There are 225,000 athletes in United States Swimming. There are 52 spots available for the Olympic team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in about 4,300. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship. It builds self-esteem and fitness. It teaches a child that you can often learn more from defeat as from victory. It provides the opportunity to build life-long friendships. Swimming builds good people and you should simply be happy your child wants to participate.