

For Swim Parents: What do I say to my swimmer after a bad meet?

First, there are no **bad** meets. Some are faster than others. Be glad your kid is involved in the greatest sport on earth and is not some video game junkie.

I truly believe that nearly every swim parent wants to do the right thing for their swimmer. The problem is that no one has taught them what the right thing is. If you have figured it out on your own and have a happy swimmer who is really enjoying this great sport, then as the Australians would say, "Good on Ya."

If you find that you are disappointed **IN** your swimmer, then shame on you. Regardless of what you think, your swimmer is not a reflection of you. You are not going to get credit for great performances and no one will blame you for less than great performances. If you are disappointed **IN** your swimmer, then get a life. It's not about you! (I can talk to you this way since I **AM** a swim parent.)

And never compare your swimmer to another swimmer. If you find that you do this, then slap yourself. If you think you can hide your comparisons from your kid; guess again. You can't; they can read you like a book and it is a no-win situation for everyone. (I can talk to you this way since I **AM** a swim parent and I have made all of these mistakes.)

Here is a great quote from a Swim Mom from Florida:

"If the parents had to put on a speedo and get upon the blocks just once a year....after their race let the kids critique them and I know things would change.....if your kid has the courage and the work ethic to test their skills in front of everyone, they are way ahead of all the other kids in the world sitting home on Saturday morning watching cartoons. Be proud of them."

Every swimmer gets negative at times. How you respond can determine how long they stay negative and if they learn anything from the experience. Every great athlete learns from every competition.

Here is what I recommend to parents when their child is disappointed after a meet.

- Listen and let them vent without trying to fix things. Moms are much better at this than dads.
- Remind them to communicate with their coach. This is the best advice you can give them.
- Understand that the disappointment is only temporary.
- Don't offer advice on how to correct any problems with performance. That's the coach's job.

- Ask them what they learned from the competition that can help them in the future.
- Don't let them make excuses. Don't allow them to blame outside influences such as; "the girl in the lane 5 scared me", "you didn't pack my racing suit", "the pool was too crowded so I didn't get a good warm-up" or the ever popular, "the coach didn't tell me how to swim my race". Get them to understand that THEY are responsible for their results.
- Ask them if they kept hydrated during the meet.
- Although I don't suggest the kids eat candy; this might be a great time to offer a bag of M&M's. It might lighten their mood. Keep some hidden around the house for just such occasions.
- Let them know that you are proud of them, but more importantly remind them that they should be proud of themselves.
- Most importantly, let them know that you love them.

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