***5 Tips for Swim Parents to Handle Conflicts with Coaches***

Have you ever questioned your kids’ coach or had a conflict? I’m talking about a variety of issues — maybe you’re concerned there isn’t enough stroke technique, your kid isn’t getting enough attention, or isn’t making the progress another swimmer is. How we handle situations may determine if our child benefits or is harmed from our involvement. The following tips have come from my own experience as a parent and board member — from each end of the relationship. These tips can be used in the classroom, too.

If it’s not a safety issue and your child isn’t in danger, there are several courses of action you can take if you have a conflict with the coach:

## Number One:

Don’t tell your bff swim parent, your second-best swim parent friend, or a random parent standing on deck all about it. I’ve found that talk does not make problems go away. The opposite usually happens. You get lots of conflicting advice, you’re pressured to take action, and you’ve made other parents disgruntled with their team or coach, who were previously happy as pie.

## Number Two:

Ask for a meeting. Don’t sit around gossiping—or post it on FB. Go directly to the horse’s mouth and schedule an appointment. Not during practice. It’s best to schedule a meeting when your child isn’t present. There’s nothing positive about your swimmer’s group staring and listening as you and a coach are deep in discussion.

## Number Three:

If you don’t want to talk to the coach, call a board member. The board members are there to listen and to help. Often, it’s best to talk to a board member before you approach the coach. They can determine if it’s an issue that needs to be escalated. They may offer an explanation or produce a resolution.

## Number Four:

Don’t discuss your dissatisfaction in front of your child—if you want your swimmer to continue to trust their coach. Your swimmer’s first loyalty is with you. If you’re criticizing the coach, your child may not be able to distinguish that their coach has many great traits. Younger kids tend to view the world as black and white, and they won’t necessarily understand subtleties.

## Number Five:

Think before you act. Take a deep breath. Weigh the situation in your mind. “If I let this incident alone, will I care a week from now? A month from now? In the big scheme of things — is my child loving swimming and having fun — am I helping or hurting?”

Sometimes holding your tongue and doing nothing is the best course of action — unless your child is in some sort of danger. Taking a week to get distance and a fresh outlook can help before you send off that email or schedule a meeting.